■ ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

Cherry Pie plans foundation for juvenile justice

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Marinduque: Butterfly capital of the Philippines

■ SPORTS / A29

Strange goes wire-to-wire; Pagunsan 6th

■ LIFESTYLE / C1

30-foot Marian statue rises in Quezon City

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, May 29, 2006 ★★ 6 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 170 P18 website: www.inq7.net

5-year-old zarzuela revived in Pampanga

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

ANGELES CITY—AS A KATIPUNERO, MARIANO Proceso Pabalan Byron did not only take up arms against Spain, he rebelled against tradition by writing a zarzuela in Kapampangan, the language of the common folk.

Pabalan Byron's zarzuelas, which were popular

105-YEAR-OLD/ A7

No, they didn't name their baby Brangelina

LOS ANGELES—THE Jolie-Pitt baby has arrived—and no, they didn't name her Brangelina.

Thousands of kilometers from Hollywood but still within easy reach of celebrity hype, Angelina Jolie gave birth to Brad

NO, THEY/ A6

CELEBRITY BABY ITO!

Phivolcs: RP must prepare for big one

'We must accept likelihood of strong quakes'

By Jerry E. Esplanada

PHILIPPINE EXPERTS GRAPPLING with the mysteries of earthquakes yesterday said the devastating tremor that struck Indonesia was not a cause for alarm and that the key to preventing disasters earthquakes bring was to anticipate and prepare for them.

Renato Solidum Jr., director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), told the INQUIRER that what happened in Indonesia's central Java and nearby Pacific islands also hit by quakes yesterday did not mean similar occurrences would follow in the Philippines.

"It's not a cause for alarm. Different countries have different earthquake generators in their respective boundaries. Those generators move continuously like our generators," he said in an interview.

That the Philippines lies in the Pacific "Ring of Fire"—a region prone to volcanic eruptions and quakes—should also not cause sleepless nights.

"Yes, it is something to worry about, not with a sense of panic but concern, so that we can prepare for a big earthquake in advance," the Phivolcs chief said.

"We need to have a culture of not only the knowledge of what might happen, but also the culture of preparedness."

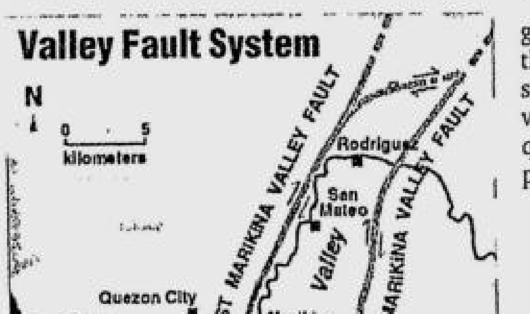
Not taking any chances, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered all disaster monitoring and management agencies "to team up with the private sector in updating and gearing up our contingency plans for any untoward threats or events."

"We must act to help others, and be prepared on our own, in times of need," she said.

Solidum said "the key" to effective disaster prevention was planning, "and the only way

PHIVOLCS/ A12

Valley Fault System



VILLAGERS carry the remains of an earthquake victim during a mass burial in Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. At least 4,300 people were killed and thousands injured when an earthquake rocked the densely populated island of Java on Saturday. AFP

Her last words were 'Daddy, Daddy'

BANTUL, INDONESIA—HIS daughter was still breathing when Poniran dug her out of the ruins of his house. But the 5-year-old died in his arms as he waited for treatment at a hospital overflowing with the injured.

"Her last words were 'Daddy, Daddy,'" Poniran said as he took a break from searching in the ruins of his quake-devastated house for salvageable items. "I have to start my life from zero again."

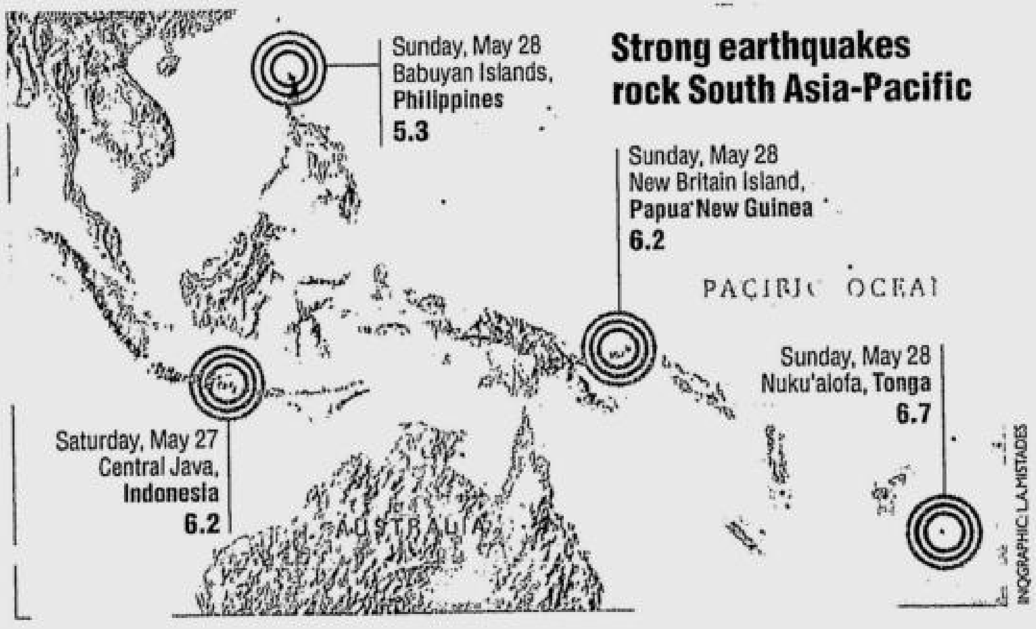
Thousands of exhausted and grieving survivors yesterday dug through their crumpled homes, searching for clothes, food and valuables after a powerful earthquake killed more than 4,300 people in central Indonesia.

The magnitude-6.3 quake struck early Saturday and injured thousands more in the heart of the densely populated island of Java. The country's worst disaster since the 2004 tsunami also stoked fears that a nearby rumbling volcano could erupt and cause further damage to the world-famous 9th century Prambanan temple.

The disaster zone stretched across hundreds of square kilometers of mostly farming communities in Yogyakarta province. The worst devastation was in the town of Bantul, where more than 2,400 people were killed and 80 percent of the homes were flattened.

HER LAST/ A22

Strong earthquakes rock South Asia-Pacific



INQGRAPHIC L.A.MISTADES

Temblors jolt Papua, Babuyan, Tonga isles

JAKARTA—THE PACIFIC'S volatile "Ring of Fire" yesterday unleashed three more earthquakes, a day after a temblor in Indonesia left more than 4,300 dead in one of the world's most seismically active regions.

The quakes shook the South Pacific nations of Papua New Guinea and Tonga less than half an hour of each other on Sunday morning.

A third temblor rattled the Babuyan islands at 5 p.m. in northern Luzon. (*See story on Page A12.*)

Although the quakes in Papua New Guinea and Tonga were as powerful as that which hit the central Indonesian island of Java, there were no reports of deaths or subsequent tsunamis.

The first quake, with a magnitude of 6.2, struck 189 km off the coast of New Britain, an island off Papua New Guinea's northeast coast, at 1:12 p.m. (0312 GMT).

The second quake hit the coast of Tonga, about 4,000 km and several time zones away, at 4:36 p.m. (0336 GMT). The US Geological Survey recorded that quake at a magnitude of 6.7.

Barry Hirshorn, a geophysicist with Hawaii's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center, said the two quakes posed no risk of a Pacific-wide tsunami and were unlikely to be related.

"They're probably unrelated, they just happened at the same time," Hirshorn said.

Another geophysicist at the center, Victor Sardina, said he believed the earthquakes were unrelated to the magnitude-6.3 quake that leveled hundreds of buildings and killed thousands of

TEMBLORS/ A23

Killings show military influence in GMA admin rising

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE CURRENT WAVE OF KILLINGS OF leftist activists and journalists follows a pattern that makes it different from and more sinister in its political implications than previous crime waves of the past 50 years.

It reveals an impotent administration that is not only hostage to invisible death squads but more so one that has lost control over the most important function of government—to ensure the life and security of its citizens, regardless of their political color.

There are ominous signs that the wave of killings suggests that right-wing extremists have captured government security policy.

An examination of the past pattern of killings demolishes the claim of police authorities that the murders of no less than 300 activists since 2001 and more than 70 journalists since 1986 cannot be stopped because the crime wave follows the "cycles of ups and downs" now on the "upswing."

This explanation attempts to exculpate the Philippine National Police, military authorities and the Arroyo administration from the responsibility of protecting the lives of citizens from death squads and to counter public suspicions that

KILLINGS/ A6

65 Pinoys bring home tales of terror from East Timor

By Nikko Dizon

GUNFIRE. BUILDINGS IN FLAMES. Gangs roaming around with machetes and bows and arrows. And, finally, uncertainty.

These were what drove 65 Filipinos out of East Timor and prompted them to fly back home to the Philippines yesterday, some of them in tears.

"It was so scary. They themselves were killing each other. Some of them even had machetes and bows and arrows," Virgilio Maniago, 50, said in Filipino as he recounted to the INQUIRER his nightmare in the world's youngest nation.

65 PINOYS/ A13

RIVERA: Environmental reporting

DAROY: Editorial cartooning

PDI reporter, cartoonist get Asian publishers' awards

HONG KONG—FOR HER REPORTING on the Rapu-Rapu mine's waste spill and for his drawings reflecting significant Asian events, INQUIRER reporter Blanche S. Rivera and editorial cartoonist Gilbert Daroy won honorable mention honors at the gala dinner for the 2006 Sopa (Society of Publishers in Asia) Awards For Editorial Excellence.

There were only two winners for each award category: The winner of the prize and the honorable mention.

Rivera was cited for environmental reporting and Daroy for editorial car-

PDI REPORTER/ A8

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas including Palawan and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/05/28/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Second FrontPage

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Abduction of Erap 5 imperils terror law

By TJ Burgonio

THE FATE OF THE CONTROVERSIAL antiterror bill now hangs in the balance in the Senate after some senators expressed alarm over the "Gestapo-like" abduction of five supporters of deposed President Joseph Estrada.

Some senators are now having "serious thoughts" about its early passage and are taking a long and hard look at the bill, particularly its provisions giving law enforcers leeway to wiretap, arrest and detain individuals on suspicion of terrorism.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III first raised objections to its early approval while the senators were grilling top military officials about the abduction of five leaders of the pro-Estrada Union of the Masses for Democracy and Justice during last week's budget plenary debates.

"I was about to support its passage into law. [The incident] now gives me serious thoughts," Osmeña said.

As shown by the case of the five Erap supporters, he said the possibility of government agents stretching the limits of the bill to "persecute innocent civilians" was not far-fetched.

"I have always objected to the broader definition [of terrorism] because of the proclivity of our law enforcement agencies, be it the PNP, NBI or AFP, to stretch the definition," he said. "If we give them an inch, they may take a mile in order that they may use the law to persecute innocent civilians."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the "Gestapo-like" arrest, detention and torture of the five had sparked fears human rights violations would escalate once the Anti-Terrorism Act was implemented.

"This will definitely affect the passage of the measure. We don't have an antiterrorism law yet but some elements of Isafp are already behaving as if the country is under a fascist rule," he said, referring to the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile sponsored the bill that seeks to define the crime of terrorism by enumerating its elements on Tuesday, paving the way for debates on the floor.

On the same day, the worried families of Ruben Dionisio, Virgilio Eustaquio, Dennis Ibuna, Jim Lucio Cabauatan and PO3 Jose Justo Curameng sought the senators' help in tracing their whereabouts.

The five were picked up Monday by military and police agents who barged into Eustaquio's home in Quezon City on suspicion they were planning to assassinate members of the Cabinet. They were dragged into a waiting vehicle, blindfolded and taken to different safe houses.

DOH warns against onset of rainy season diseases

By Christian V. Esguerra

DENGUE, DIARRHEA AND LEPTOSPIROSIS. With summer about to end, the public should watch out for these diseases, along with acute respiratory infections like the flu and pneumonia. These ailments normally strike during the rainy season, the Department of Health has warned.

The country just came from a bad dengue season which downed at least 21,817 people last year. The number exceeded the 20,000 cases initially projected by health officials.

From January to the first week of April this year, the DOH reported 3,194 dengue cases, representing 49 percent of the total number of cases recorded during the same period last year.

Acute infectious ailment

"Dengue is an acute infectious disease brought about by the bite of the Aedes mosquito that breeds in clean and stagnant water found in flower vases, cans, old rubber tires, used bottles, among other containers," the DOH said in an advisory.

"Signs and symptoms of dengue include the sudden onset of high fever for 2 to 7 days, joint and muscle pains, pain behind the eyes, weakness, and red and tiny spots in the skin that become rashes."

3-yr dengue cycle

Dengue attacks more viciously during a three-year cycle, Dr. Eric Tayag, head of the DOH National Epidemiology Center said in an earlier interview. Last year was ripe for an attack—with dengue killing at least 280 people.

Still, the 2005 experience was nowhere near the number of patients in 1998 when around 40,000 people fell sick.

Another serious disease is leptospirosis, caused by bacteria entering the skin through open wounds. It's usually contracted from vegetation, moist soil or floodwaters contaminated with rat urine.

"Signs and symptoms include fever, muscle pain and headaches. When severe, leptospirosis may affect the liver, kidneys or the brain," according to the DOH.

Big leap

From January to the first week of April this year, the disease infected 111 people. It's a big leap from the 49 cases reported in 2005.

Then there's diarrhea. It becomes serious when a person discharges "watery stools at least three times a day," according to the DOH.

"This is often accompanied by vomiting, electrolyte imbalance and dehydration, which can be fatal if not treated early," it said in the advisory.

Dehydration symptoms

"Signs and symptoms of dehydration are sunken eyeballs and fontanel in children, dry lips, excessive thirst and poor skin turgor. (When pinched, skin with normal turgor snaps back to position. Skin with decreased turgor remains elevated—a sure sign of dehydration). Diarrhea is a food-borne disease that can be acquired through ingestion of food and water contaminated with fecal material.

"To prevent diarrhea, the DOH recommends ensuring a safe water supply, the sanitary disposal of human waste and the practice of personal hygiene."

UN: Humans more likely spreaders of avian influenza

THE UNITED NATION'S FOOD AND AGRICULture Organization (FAO) said it was unreasonable to blame wild birds as the source of H5N1 or bird flu in the absence of rigorous research into their role in the ecology and dynamics of the virus.

"Human activities not birds are more likely to spread the virus," the FAO said in a statement posted last week on its web site at www.fao.org.

Avian or bird flu is a very contagious disease caused by viruses that normally infect only birds. But the virus has since mutated and it is now causing infections and even deaths in poultry and humans.

The FAO said it had been calling for more research on the deadly virus as early as 2004, "but insufficient resources had been allocated to be able to study the question properly."

Joseph Domenech, FAO's chief veterinary officer, explained that with the rapid spread of the disease, FAO now needed $308 million (P16.3 billion) for its contribution to the global program for the progressive control of avian influenza over the next three years—more than twice the sum required a few months ago.

"To date, FAO has only received $71 million (P3.7 billion)," he said.

Domenech claimed that the current avian flu crisis was "likely to be a continuing emergency that will last several years."

The FAO expressed serious concern that international interest had been focused almost exclusively on the possibility of avian flu hitting human populations to the neglect of its potentially devastating impact on poultry and other animals.

"This fails to recognize that the best way to protect people is to control and try to eradicate the disease in animals," Domenech said.

The FAO admitted that avian influenza was a complex issue in which wild birds had most often been identified as the culprits.

"It is indeed likely that they can introduce the disease to unaffected areas from countries in which the disease has already been identified—but the disease is spread through the human activities of poultry production, improper hygiene and uncontrolled commercialization," the UN agency said. *Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Oil firms hike prices anew

CITING HIGHER WORLD OIL PRICES, OIL firms raised gasoline and kerosene prices by 50 centavos per liter following similar adjustments by the country's two oil refiners.

Chevron Philippines Corp. increased prices at 6 a.m. yesterday, while Total (Philippines) Corp. increased prices at 12:01 a.m. today.

The two oil firms also adjusted liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices by 56 centavos per kilogram, inclusive of the 12-percent value-added tax.

New oil player Seaoil Petroleum Corp. also raised gasoline and kerosene prices at 12:01 a.m. today. Unioil Petroleum Philippines Inc. followed suit at 6 a.m.

Like refiners Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., the four oil firms retained the price of diesel, in an effort to help the public transport sector.

Data from the Department of Energy showed that the regional benchmark Dubai crude skyrocketed to $65.55 a barrel as of May 18 from last month's $64.14 a barrel. *Abigail Ho*

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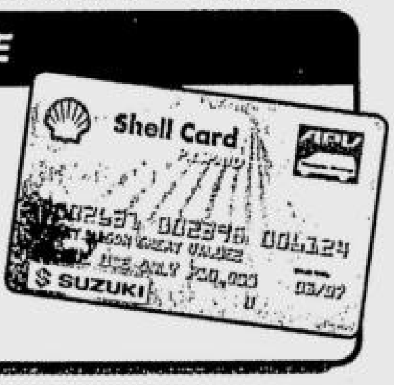

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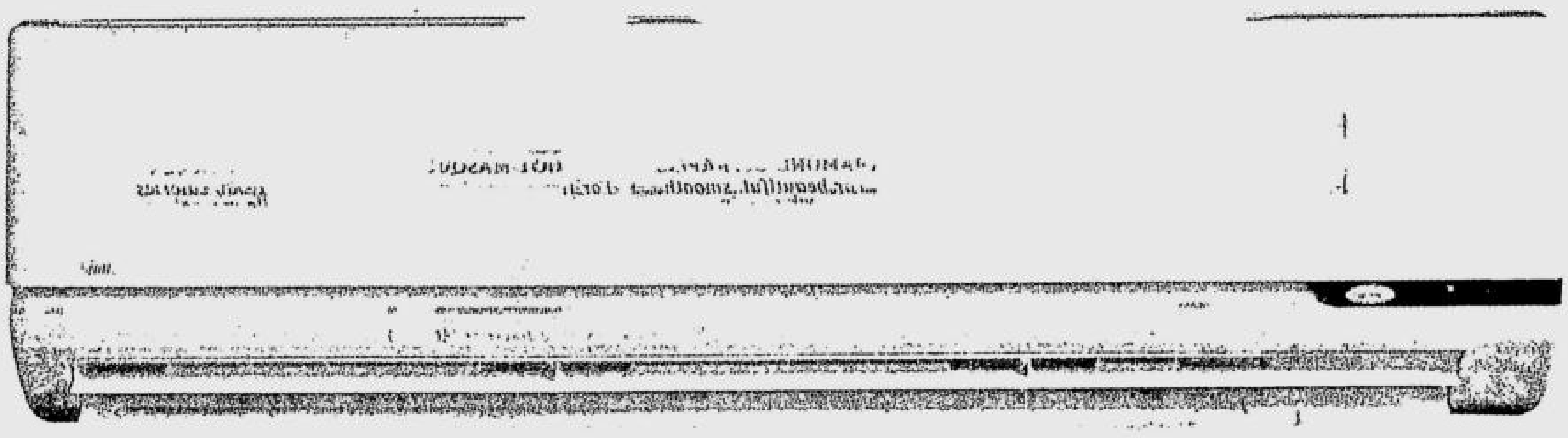

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De Venecia in Japan to press for resumption of loans

SPEAKER JOSE DE VENECIA flew to Japan on Wednesday on a mission for President Macapagal-Arroyo: To restore the $80 million (P4.2 billion) in Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the country.

The Japanese grants and yen-package loans have been frozen since Ms Arroyo assumed office in 2001.

Before De Venecia left for Tokyo, he told reporters the ODA grants "could be restored," and it was the President herself who was taking "decisive steps" to restore them.

He said the yen-denominated loans could be utilized for urgent infrastructure and to fund the country's antipoverty programs and create thousands of jobs.

De Venecia also said Ms Arroyo gave instructions for the payment of P70 million to Japanese construction companies in order to complete the refund of value-added taxes collected from VAT-exempt companies.

The $600-$800 million in loans from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) represent a major source of capital funds for the Philippines with 30 to 40 years repayment at less than 1 percent per annum.

The Speaker called Japan the Philippines' "biggest provider" of ODA and a major source of foreign direct investment.

His official trip to Japan, which Philippine Ambassador Domingo L. Siazon Jr. arranged, came on the heels of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan.

Yesterday, De Venecia, accompanied by his wife Gina and a delegation from the House, opened a five-day official visit which will be capped by a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and an audience with the Japanese Emperor. *Michael Lim Ubac*

Pork barrel tool against impeachment, claims solon

WITH OVER TWO MONTHS TO GO BEFORE a second impeachment bid could be filed by the opposition, Malacañang is once again relying on the weapon under its control to rein in lawmakers and ensure the defeat of the next attempt to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo—the pork barrel.

Opposition Rep. Rodolfo Plaza of the lone district of Agusan del Sur said Malacañang had deliberately blocked the release of the pork barrel funds of lawmakers for this year ahead of the coming impeachment attempt in July.

In an interview yesterday, Plaza said Malacañang had been withholding the first and second tranches of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) since January.

The PDAF, popularly known as pork barrel, is given in the form of Special Allotment Release Orders (SARO) and Notice of Cash Allocations (NCA).

But this time what is being withheld is not the pork barrel of members of the minority, according to Plaza.

"Malacañang is really pulling a fast one on members of the majority," Plaza said, explaining that this "clever tactic" would ensure the allegiance of the majority coalition in the lower chamber.

"Malacañang will withdraw the SARO when impeachment is inevitable, so that the congressmen can't ask for more. If it releases the SAROs this early, the congressmen will ask for additional pork barrel," he said.

House majority members, whose SAROs and NCAs were usually the first to be released, have been grumbling over the delay in the PDAF releases since March.

"But all they received were promises," said Plaza.

Under the reduced PDAF, each of the 236 congressmen will receive P40 million in yearly allocations usually given in four tranches, or one at every end of the quarter.

Although the 2006 budget has yet to be passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President, lawmakers could already draw on their congressional allocations because the 2005 budget was reenacted in January.

The proposed 2006 budget reinstates the original amount of P70 million for each congressman, but Deputy Minority Leader Rolex Suplico of Iloilo said the amount could go up to P75 million.

Last week, Suplico claimed that House majority members had been badgering the opposition to file the impeachment complaint as leverage against Malacañang. *Michael Lim Ubac*

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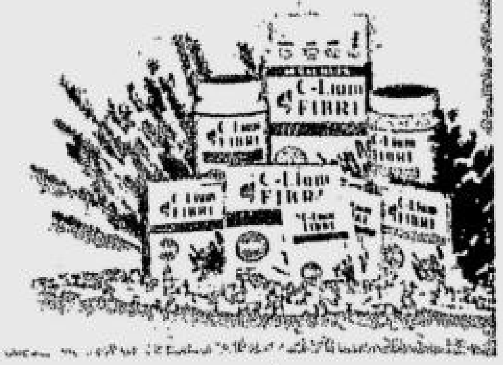

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No, they didn't name their baby Brangelina

From page A1

Pitt's daughter on Saturday in Africa, Pitt's publicist announced.

"The night of May 27, 2006 in Namibia, Africa, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt welcomed their daughter Shiloh Nouvel Jolie-Pitt. No further information is being given," publicist Cindy Guagenti said in a statement.

JOLIE FILE PHOTO

No photographs were being released, Guagenti added.

The baby's arrival had been the subject of intense press speculation in recent months, prompting the superstar couple to decamp to Africa for privacy. It escalated on Tuesday when an e-mail Pitt sent to the Cannes Film Festival said he was unable to attend because of the baby's "imminent arrival."

The birth came a little more than a month after another blockbuster delivery—a girl born to Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes.

Heavy security

Jolie and Pitt had powerful help protecting their privacy from the government of Namibia, which refused to grant entry to reporters seeking to cover the birth without the actors' written permission.

The government arrested photographers, confiscated film, ringed the couple's hotel with heavy security and set up large green barriers on the beach to shield the family.

Jolie and Pitt were linked romantically shortly after appearing together in the 2005 movie "Mr. and Mrs. Smith."

Jolie, 30, is a frequent visitor to Africa and serves as goodwill ambassador for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. She has two adopted children—toddler Zahara, from Ethiopia, and 4-year-old Maddox, from Cambodia.

Both children had their surnames legally changed to Jolie-Pitt after Pitt announced his intentions to coadopt the two.

Pitt and actress Jennifer Aniston divorced last fall.

Jolie, who won an Oscar for her supporting role in 1999's "Girl, Interrupted," is divorced from Billy Bob Thornton and Jonny Lee Miller. *AP*

Killings show ...

From page A1

these three state institutions are in a conspiracy to create a new communist witch-hunt in the first decade of the 21sh century to ensure the short-term survival of an embattled regime.

During the 1950s and 1970s, the violence toll involving human rights violations sprang from the anticommunist insurgency crackdown on the Hukblahap and New People's Army guerrillas and cadres in the peasantry and the urban-based trade unions.

The killings then could directly be traced to battles between guerrilla and government troops and the extrajudicial violence by government-sponsored death squads and government-armed vigilantes.

There was no mistake in determining responsibility for that wave of human rights violations. There were no gray areas.

White terror

Fifty years onward, past the era of military juntas in Latin American and the low-intensity anti-Left insurgency campaigns in Nicaragua, Chile and Argentina, an ostensibly civilian government is throwing back Philippine democracy to the benighted era of the white terror of an anticommunist witch-hunt.

The Arroyo administration is trying to revive the climate of unsolved purges and disappearances, is speaking the political rhetoric of that anachronistic era, and is shuttling this country back to a time warp.

In denouncing the wave of killings and kidnappings of members of the above-ground Left, the Bayan Muna party-list group, which has borne the brunt of the death squad assassinations, Amnesty International (AI) and the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) took pains not to accuse the administration directly of instigating the killings of the leftist activists and of the journalists.

However, AI and the CHR emphasized two points—the unchecked killings and the unabated high spiral of the death toll in just five years unmistakably constitute human rights violations, and that while there is no direct evidence of government sponsorship of the death squads, there is a clear "pattern of impunity."

Colors of killers

The CHR held the government accountable and emphatically urged it to stop the killings, regardless of "what colors the killers are." It said: "In human rights terms, the government is still responsible even if persons in authority are not behind the killings."

AI has pointed out that a "climate of impunity shielding the perpetrators of such killings deepened as ineffective investigations failed to lead to the prosecution of those responsible."

It noted "increased killings in particular provinces were reportedly linked to the public labeling of leftist groups as NPA front organizations by local AFP commanders."

AI said that the administration might be "encouraging more extrajudicial killings" with the recent promotion of Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan as Army commander in Central Luzon. The CHR has received complaints of human rights violations from area where Palparan has been posted, including Samar and Mindoro.

Palparan recently called for the return of Republic Act No. 1700, the Anti-Subversion Law, which outlawed the Communist Party of the Philippines. He said the setup allowed the CPP "to infiltrate the government through the party-list organizations."

"I would be happy the communist parties would be outlawed again ... It's better for them to go back to the hills," he said.

Gonzales' line, too

Palparan said military spies had infiltrated the NPA and legal communist organizations, and attributed the sharp rise of deaths within the ranks of the legal Left to the alleged internal communist purges.

This line was echoed by Norberto Gonzales, President Macapagal-Arroyo's national security chief, who has claimed that recent "mass graves" were uncovered in Mindanao where victims of the alleged internal communist purges were buried.

Statements and actions such as those of Palparan and Gonzales and the slow progress of the investigations ordered by the President could only have encouraged the perpetrators to believe they are shielded from prosecution. These are signals for the military and police not to go ahead with inquiries.

They have also strengthened suspicions that Ms Arroyo is unwilling to rein in the death squads and to stay the hands of rabidly anticommunist segments of the armed forces because of two reasons.

First, Ms Arroyo needs to consolidate her support in the military to counter attempts by her political enemies to unseat her and quash coup plots by mutinous pockets of the officer corps.

Second, she can use the red herring to weaken the Left as a political force and as a potential ally of seditious military factions, and to find scapegoats to justify invoking extraordinary presidential powers (such as in February's proclamation of national emergency).

Ms Arroyo is playing the communist witch-hunt as one of her last cards to stay in power as she walks closer toward the end of the political tightrope.

The problem is the more she allows the military radicals to dictate security and even political policies, the more she paves the way for the expansion of military influence in her administration and the more it becomes dependent on the military for regime survival.

Corrections

IN THE MAY 22 ISSUE, a Metro story on Page A26—"Marikina student wins in Intel science fair"—misstated the school from which Raymond Joseph Amurao graduated. Amurao graduated from Marikina Science High School—not Marikina High School.

* * *

IN YESTERDAY'S ISSUE, a front-page article—"Bush honors Fil-Am volunteer"—misstated Virginia Ganzon Sturwold's age. According to Sturwold, she is 82—not 81. She also said that the same article misstated where she had met her ex-husband. She met him when they were both graduate students at Indiana University in Bloomington—not in a New York university. According to her, the article also misstated the organization of her boss who helped her get away from her abusive husband. Her boss then was with the American Institutes for Research in Washington, DC—not with the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

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105-year-old zarzuela revived

From page A1

theatrical entertainment at the time, featured characters based on ordinary people. He also developed stories around family themes such as love, domestic quarrels and jealousy.

Pabalan Byron's "Ing Managpi" (The Patcher), first staged on Sept. 13, 1900, at the Teatro Sabina in Bacolor, Pampanga, thus became the first zarzuela in the vernacular in the Philippines.

The significance of this feat was noted by the late literary historian Rosalina Icban-Castro in her 1981 book, "Literature of the Pampangos."

"Ing Managpi" is older than the best known Tagalog zarzuela, "Walang Sugat," by Severino Reyes and the Kapampangan zarzuela, "Alang Dios," by Juan Crisostomo Soto, according to Robby Tantingco, executive director of the Holy Angel University's (HAU) Center for Kapampangan Studies.

Young theater artists at the HAU honored the legacy of Pabalan Byron by restaging the 105-year-old zarzuela on Saturday as part of National Heritage Month.

The zarzuela centered on the domestic quarrel between couple Doña Juana and Don Diego and was interspersed with comic relief from the family's servants. The feud was resolved in the end with the help of the couple's maid, Sianang.

Tantingco said the production had one simple goal—to allow the modern audience to "see [the play] as our ancestors saw it."

The Center for Kapampangan Studies, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the Filipinas Heritage Festival Inc., chaired by Bambi Harper, produced the play.

Miracle

Staging the humorous "Ing Managpi" in this day and age was short of a miracle since very little of the script survived.

According to the producers, Cornelio, Pabalan Byron's brother, published the script on May 19, 1909.

Decades later, in 1961, researchers like Ely Javillonar, studied the texts. Then E.Y. Cunanan retyped the script in new Pampango orthography (discarding the letters c, f, j, q, v, x and z) and Icban-Castro printed the entire 11 scenes in her anthology.

The problem was in the musical scoring. The surviving text failed to document the original music and lyrics by Amado Gutierrez David and the rare musical sheets that were rescued from Mt. Pinatubo's lahar in 1995 were faded and tattered beyond recognition.

The difficult task of reconstructing the five songs fell on the shoulders of Rodolfo "Stan" Palma, a member of the family behind the "Orchestra Palma."

From memory

The Palma clan, beginning with Stan's great grandfather Pablo Palma and grandfather Faustino Palma, had breathed music into the zarzuelas in Bacolor's Teatro Sabina and Guagua's Teatro Trining between 1900 and 1925.

Stan, 46, said his connection with the past was never lost.

He kept in touch with Nestor Galura, great grandson of Felix Galura Napao, a contemporary of Pabalan Byron and Soto. Galura also collected zarzuela scripts.

Members of the Palma clan gather every year on Holy Thursday to rehearse for the Good Friday processions. On one of these occasions, Stan asked his uncle, Prof. Virgilio Palma, to do a *tiririn* (humming or playing of songs based on memories of hearing their elders performing it).

As the melodies took form, Stan said he consulted Galura to validate the compositions.

Next, Stan reconstructed the lyrics through Galura's recollections of what his great grandfather had passed on to him.

Unity

The Palma-Galura tandem laid the groundwork for the zarzuela's restaging by asking a select set of Bacolor residents to perform the play during the town's La Naval fiesta in November 2005.

The May 26 restaging of the "Ing Managpi" at the HAU did not have the full *compersa* (a set of violins that carried the melody, a guitar and bass). But Stan assembled 16 violinists for the occasion, with his 8-year-old daughter Cyrielle Marie Palma, a fifth-generation artist, among the musicians.

Through Cyrielle's help, Remejia Lacson (playing Doña Juana) and Rona Reyes (playing Sianang) mastered the melody.

"I hope the play will be a uniting factor for us Bacoloreños," Stan said, explaining why he took on the task.

His town, once the Philippines' capital, was buried by volcanic mudflow in 1991, losing most of it to the disaster until 1997. The residents remained scattered in at least seven resettlements but some 5,000 families have returned to settle permanently.

Preserve culture

Harper said more works should be restaged and Filipino arts and culture, on the whole, should be preserved as these are in "greater danger" of being erased or forgotten due to the threats of globalization.

"Culture connects the past and the future," Harper said, just before lights bathed the stage for the open-air performance.

The play will go on tour in campuses and communities around Pampanga, said Tantingco.

The modern cast—Lacson, Reyes, Edgar John Ocampo (Don Diego) Roilinger Calilung (Fermin) and Daniel Maglambayan (Pablo)—said they hope to equal if not surpass the zarzuela's maiden performance 105 years ago which featured Paula Gozun, Carmen Alfaro, Teodoro Andaya, Dionisio Magyani and Ignacio Navarro.

The difficult task, they said, was to master the language of the time that Pabalan Byron, in defiance of the Spanish colonizers, memorialized in words.

Pabalan Byron's zarzuela "Apat Ya Ing Junio (The Fourth of June)," which Icban-Castro wrote as the "best," has yet to be revived on stage.

"Apat Ya Ing Junio" mirrored a historical event, when Kapampangan revolutionaries stormed the garrison in Bacolor by throwing burning coconut husks at the building and killing Spanish soldiers.

The attack heeded Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo's proclamation that fixed the noon of May 31, 1900 as the hour for the start of simultaneous revolts.

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PDI reporter, cartoonist cited

From page A1

tooning at the awards night held in Hong Kong on Thursday.

A third Filipino, former INQUIRER business reporter Elena Torrijos, now writing for the Singapore-based Asian Banker Journal, won the most prestigious prize, taking the Local Journalist Award.

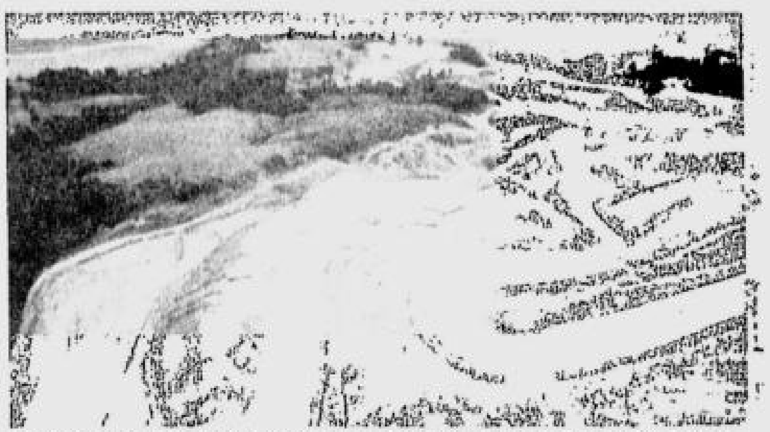
Rivera, who covers the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, was cited for her series of stories on the mine spill that led to the closure of the Lafayette mining operations on Rapu Rapu Island in Albay.

The series of stories was published six months before the Rapu-Rapu fact-finding commission released its report recommending the closure of the mine and a review of the Philippine Mining Act.

Rivera's stories came out in the INQUIRER in November 2005.

Daroy won honors for his cartoons on the December 2004 tsunami that struck Asian coastlines and killed about 200,000 people, and on the Burma (Myanmar) issue in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Awards were given in 17 categories in each of three divisions—regional publications, large magazines and English wire services (Division A); for local newspapers and small magazines in English (B), and for Chinese-language publications (C).



RIVERA won honorable mention for her coverage of the Lafayette mining accident in Rapu-Rapu, Albay.
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Both INQUIRER awards were won in Division B.

Clear, informative writing

Torrijos won the top journalist award, which covered all three divisions, for what a judge described as her "clear and informative writing that helps the readers see and understand the subject."

The other categories included excellence in business reporting, human rights reporting, news photography and features, as well as opinion writing, magazine cover design, special issue, explanatory reporting, public service journalism, reporting of breaking news and the scoop award.

The awardees were honored at a dinner at JW Marriot Hotel here.

Keynote speaker Anson Chan, Hong Kong's former chief secretary for administration, made a strong pitch for press freedom and free flow of information in the former British colony under the concept of "one country, two systems."

Post dominates

Chan assailed Internet giant Yahoo for giving information on web users that led to the arrest of a journalist in the China mainland.

Hong Kong's dominant newspaper, the South China Morning Post, which won the environmental reporting and editorial cartooning awards, dominated Division B, topping nine of 17 categories.

The Financial Times won five awards and Time Asia took four of 17 categories in Division A.

The Society of Publishers in Asia was founded in 1982 to foster cooperation and understanding among its members.

Media's vitality

The Sopa awards were established in 1999 to pay tribute to excellence in both the traditional and new media and encourage vitality in the region.

Nancy Valiente, Filipino chair of the Sopa and managing director of the South China Morning Post, said the record number of entries this year "signifies to the vitality of Asia's publishing industry and the strong commitment of regional journalists to editorial excellence in an increasingly competitive media environment."

Record entries

A record number of 457 entries from across the region were evaluated by a board of judges made up of 85 journalists, editors and academics from top national and regional media and top universities in Asia.

"We had a remarkably strong collection of winning entries this year, which shows that the dramatic increase in the overall number of submissions for Sopa awards is being accompanied by a commensurate rise in overall quality," said David Plott, Sopa director of judges from the University of Hong Kong's Journalism and Media Studies Center.

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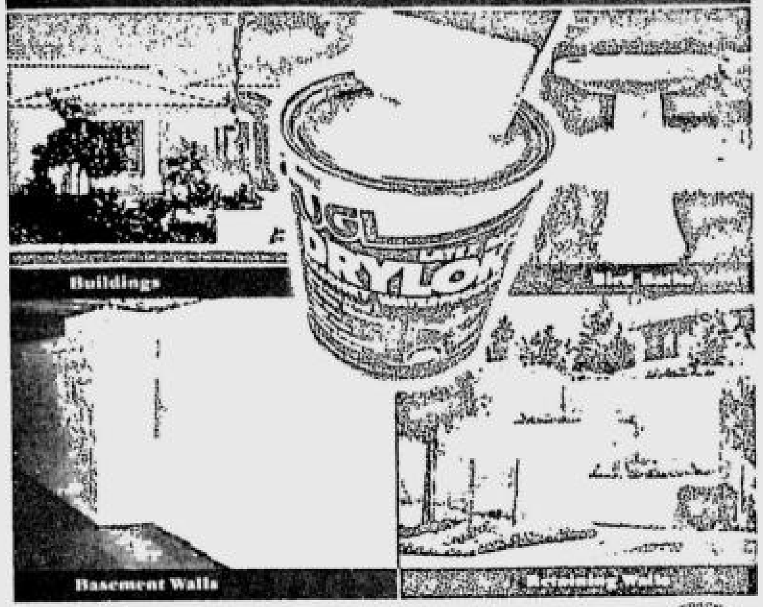

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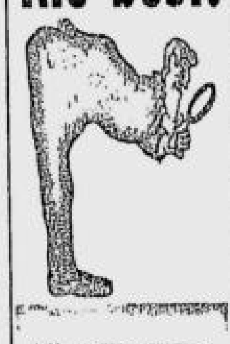

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House set to address attendance problem

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NOW wants to do something about absentee members "plaguing the chamber."

But how far can it go?

Administration lawmakers on Friday backed House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles's move to "reform" absentee members by imposing disciplinary action on [those] who frequently fail to attend plenary sessions and committee hearings.

House Deputy Speaker Gerry Salapuddin and Deputy Majority Leader Antonio Cerilles said it was time the House cracked the whip on truant congressmen who failed to perform their primary task of overseeing legislation.

They believed that imposing decisive and punitive action on absentee members would help the House regain the public's trust and respect.

Nograles said he will call a caucus this week to address the "chronic problem" of quorum.

Stricter policies on attendance

Nograles, who chairs the committee on rules, said he shared the sentiments of Quezon Rep. Erin Tañada, who complained last week that the lack of quorum prevented the lawmakers from performing their job of enacting laws at a faster pace.

"The leadership will address this in caucus [this] week, together with issues on Charter change. We need to come up with stricter policies on attendance," Nograles said.

Empty session hall seats have been a common sight in the chamber since late last year.

There were days when only five or six lawmakers held session—the presiding officer (usually a deputy speaker), one of the assistant majority leaders, one or two of the deputy minority leaders, the sponsor of the proposed measure and the interpellator.

More than half of the 236-member chamber were usually absent, while about 50 of those lawmakers who were present were usually either in their offices receiving guests or whiling away the time in the congressional lounge.

It was Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. who first called attention to the failure of the House last year to muster the required quorum, which is 50 percent plus one of the 236 congressmen.

Lack of warm bodies

Pichay said the lack of warm bodies to transact business (session days are Monday to Wednesday) reflected badly on the House leadership.

But the problem persisted, prompting the presiding officer and majority leader to appeal on many occasions to the House minority not to question the quorum in order to speed up the legislative mill.

The last time the chamber had enough warm bodies on the floor was on May 16 when Speaker Jose de Venecia presided over the resumption of the second regular session of the 13th Congress.

After that, the majority (with the cooperation of a friendly minority) had to resort again to the myth in parliamentary procedure that there's a quorum unless one questions it.

But with the Speaker himself complaining lately about the slow pace of Charter change, Nograles has had to address the chronic absences.

Michael Lim Ubac

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, May 29, 2006
7th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 19:1-8
Gospel: John 16:29-33

The disciples said to Jesus, "Now you are speaking plainly and not in veiled language! Now we see that you know all things, even before we question you. Because of this we believe that you came from God."

Jesus answered them, "You say that you believe! The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.

"I have told you all this, so that in me you may have peace. You will have trouble in the world; but, courage! I have overcome the world."

Commentary

This is the time of the Spirit that completes baptisms, deepens and confirms belief, and makes us public witnesses. It is the Spirit that teaches us, guides us, encourages us, and transforms our words and works, ethically and religiously into the deeds of God in Jesus.

And Jesus warns us: do you really believe? Like the disciples, do we panic, scatter and run when something confronts us, and we become rejected; or do we disagree among ourselves that one can't see the Spirit for all the individual agendas? The disciples leave Jesus alone, and sadly the Church still does the same thing. It is only in Jesus, the Word of God, that we find peace and it is that peace that gives us the courage to overcome our own weakness and the world.

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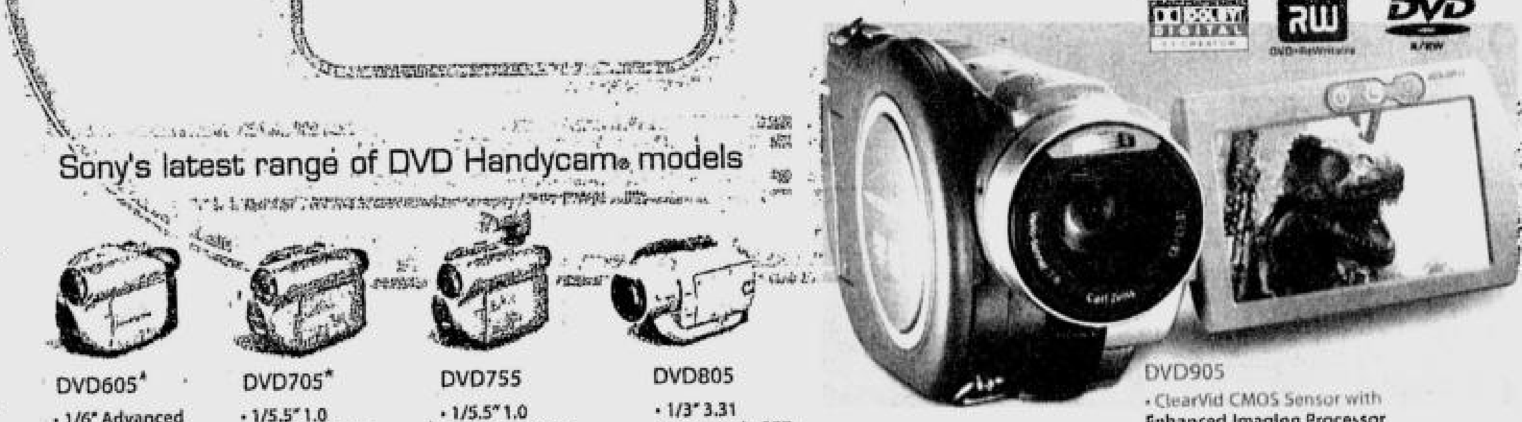

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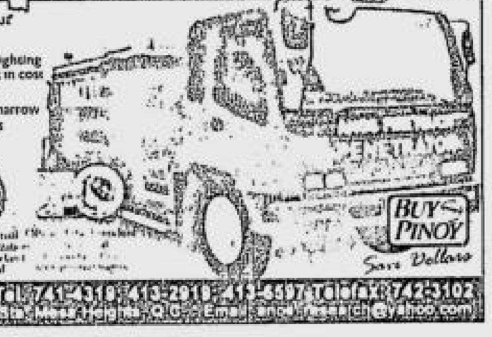

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4. LAURO DELOS SANTOS	III-E2	46B	2	16	2
5. CONSORCIA BATERZAL	III-E2	46B	13	16/7B	7/10
6. WILFREDO B. VILLABRILLE	III-E2	46B	14	16/7B	8/11
7. LEOPOLDO J. JOVERES	III-E2	46C	12	17/7C	2/12
8. BUENAVENTURA A. AGANA	III-E2	46D	16	18/7D	6/15
9. FERNANDO M. OPLE	III-E2	46D	17	18/7D	5/16
10. FELIXBERTO I. CASTILLO JR.	III-E2	46E	6	19	6
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13. ROMEO C. PARADO	III-E2	46E	16	19	16
14. DOMINADOR P. MARIÑAS	III-E2	48G	12	21/7E	12/2
15. BONIFACIO M. ANDRINO	III-E2	48G	16	21	16
16. DOMINGO B. SATUR	III-E2	48G	18	21	18
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(PDI - May 29, 2006)

MILF junks provision in RP-OIC deal

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) on Saturday rejected one of the provisions in the six-point agreement forged recently by the Philippine government and the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

Khaled Musa, deputy chief of the MILF information committee, said the group was surprised when the government and the OIC agreed "to converge" elements of the peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) with the peace negotiations being conducted with the MILF.

The agreement was embodied in a joint communiqué between Manila and the OIC issued on May 22 following a fact-finding mission by the latter to review the status of the 1996 peace accord between the government and the MNLF.

Musa said that while the MILF desired to work closer with the MNLF and other groups dedicated to the defense and promotion of the interests of the Bangsamoro people, they rejected the provision even if the intention appeared to be good.

"The MILF deserves all the right to be consulted. The framework of the MNLF peace pact with the government differs radically from what the MILF is negotiating with the government," Musa said.

Musa said the MILF will seek clarification of the issue from the OIC.

The OIC brokered the talks that led to the signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement between the government and the MNLF. The MNLF was granted observer status in the OIC in 1977. The government and the MNLF finally signed a peace accord in 1996.

Also agreed upon during the recent OIC fact-finding mission was the need to review the 1996 peace agreement in a high-level tripartite meeting to be set up in Jeddah as soon as possible; the renewal of efforts to bring the peace dividend to the Bangsamoro people with the support of OIC member-states, the Islamic Development Bank and the Fund for Islamic Solidarity; the early resolution of the case against MNLF chair Nur Misuari within the framework of the Philippine judicial process; the sustenance of the breakthrough for peace and unity in Sulu brought about by the visit; and the continuation by the government to seek observer status in the OIC. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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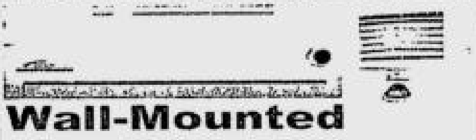

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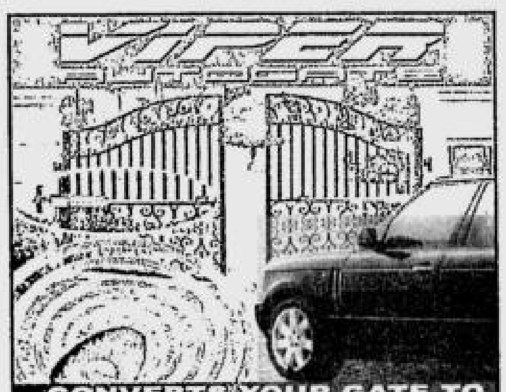

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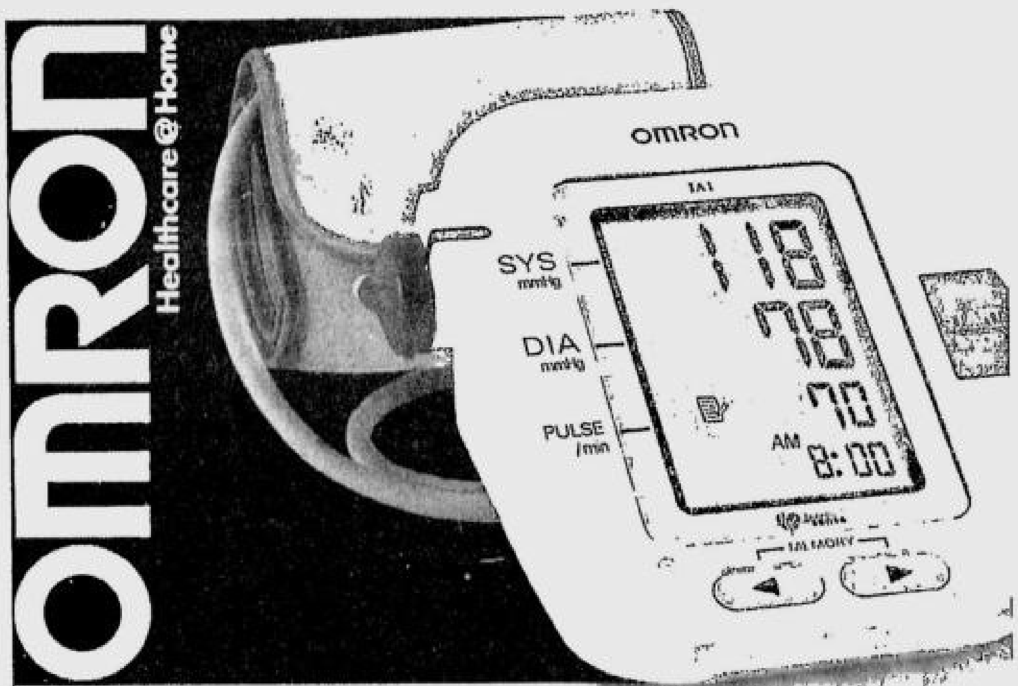

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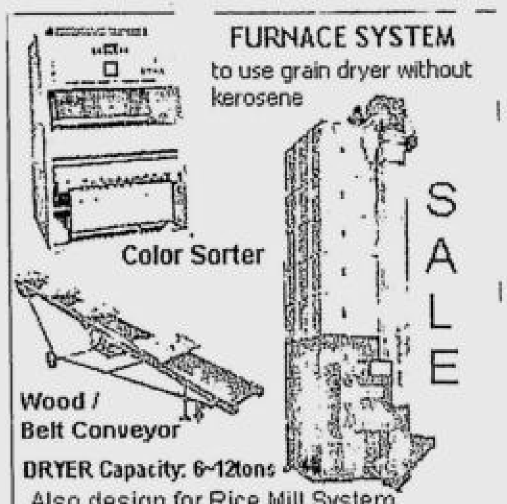

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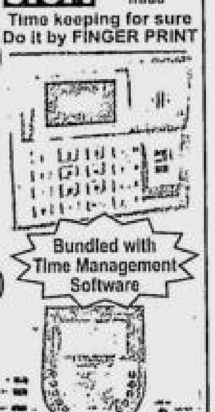

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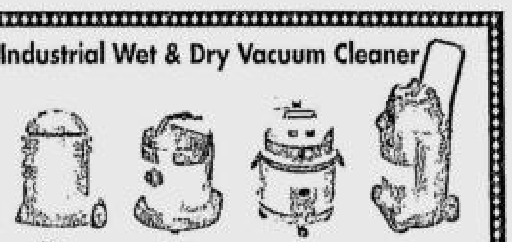

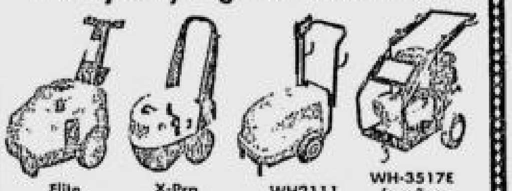

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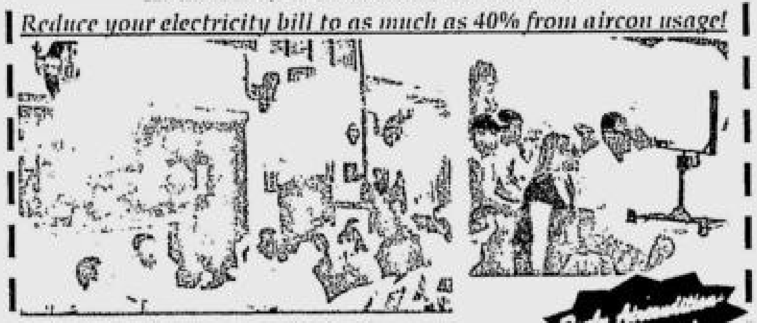

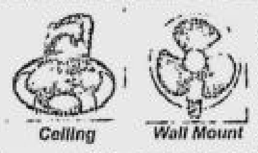

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Phivolcs: RP must prepare for big one

From page A1

to prevent disasters caused by earthquakes is to anticipate and prepare for them."

He said the "good news" was that government agencies had been actively involved in earthquake preparedness.

He said the Department of Public Works and Highways had been inspecting public facilities.

The Department of Education and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority have joined the National Disaster Coordinating Council in advocating quake preparedness in both public and private schools, homes and offices.

"In the Makati business district, building administrators have come up with emergency evacuation plans. We're currently finalizing an action plan for the whole country," Solidum said.

The sobering news

Still, the geographical reality can be pretty sobering.

A Phivolcs report furnished the INQUIRER said that the existence of subterranean "earthquake generators" and the recorded strong earthquakes that had hit the Philippines "should readily convince us that the country is indeed seismically active."

"We should also accept the fact that since earthquakes with magnitude 7 or more had affected us in the recent past, the likelihood of these destructive earthquakes occurring again in the future is indeed very strong," the report said.

Solidum said the West Valley Fault or WVF—formerly known as the Marikina Fault, one of the country's active faults—generated a magnitude 7-plus or major earthquake when it last moved about 200 years ago.

"We can't say when exactly it would move again. But considering its long repose period, the probability of it moving again soon is increasing and increasing," he said.

5-20 quakes a day

Movements along these faults and in several trenches, in addition to the two seismically rambunctious tectonic plates where the Philippine archipelago sits, generate between five and 20 earthquakes a day.

The WVF forms part of the so-called Valley Fault System, or VFS, located 5 km east of the center of Metro Manila.

It runs from Montalban, Rizal, in the north, passes through the eastern portion of Metro Manila, or west of Laguna de Bay, and extends southward, possibly as far as the Tagaytay ridge.

On the other hand, the East Valley Fault extends from Montalban south to the Pasig City area.

Danger zones

In a briefing paper, Phivolcs said that "based on radiocarbon dates and soil development, scientists ... have determined at least three rupturing events within the last 1,400 years along the VFS. The last earthquake that ruptured the system probably occurred during the 18th or 19th century."

In its April edition, National Geographic magazine featured the Philippines as one of the earthquake "danger zones" worldwide. It also tagged the country as an earthquake "high risk" zone.

In the National Geographic map, Asia's high risk areas—which include Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Pakistan, parts of China, India and Bangladesh—were shaded bright orange.

Asked how he would rate the Philippines in terms of preparedness on a scale of one to 10, Solidum said: "It's hard to say. We don't have the right indicators yet. We're just starting a program of monitoring these earthquakes along with other countries around the world."

But he said that compared to Indonesia, the Philippines had a more sound building code.

"In Indonesia, reports said those destroyed by the quakes were buildings made of bricks, wood or basically old materials. Here, it is an entirely different thing," he said.

RP better equipped

Solidum said the Philippines was "way ahead of our neighbors in terms of equipment."

From only 35 quake recording stations two years ago, Phivolcs currently operates a nationwide network of 64 seismic stations, put up with financial and technical aid from Japan.

Only 35 of the stations are manned.

Solidum claimed the government's preparedness level the past couple of years was "definitely better than before."

"We now have more data. We also have guidelines on how to go about seismic hazards and other quake-related issues," he said.

According to Phivolcs, "the most seismically active" part of the country is its eastern section, with an average of 16 quakes a year.

"The other relatively active parts are found in the eastern side of northern Luzon and the vicinity of Lubang Island and Mindoro. The presence of the East Luzon Trench, Casiguran Fault and the northern segment of the Philippine Fault Zone make the areas near Dingalan Bay (in Aurora) and Casiguran Sound (in Quezon) earthquake-prone," it said.

Patient and impulsive

In its cover story titled "Quake: The Next Big One," the National Geographic noted a "fundamental problem" with earthquakes.

"They refuse to operate on human standard time. They're on their own peculiar schedule. Earthquake faults have a nasty way of combining patience with impulsiveness," it said.

Today, some of the simplest questions about earthquakes remain hard to answer, said the publication.

"Why do they start? What makes them stop? Why do some small quakes grow into bigger quakes, while others stay small?

"And there's the broader question. Are there clear patterns, rules and regularities in earthquakes, or are they inherently random and chaotic?"

Predicting earthquakes

History has shown the frightening power of earthquakes.

The Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami that wiped out more than 200,000 lives in several Asian countries was caused by a massive quake. A magnitude-7.6 quake centered in Kashmir last October killed 73,000 people.

The US magazine said earthquake prediction "remains a matter of myth, of fabulations in which birds and snakes and fish and bunny rabbits somehow sniff out the coming calamity."

"What scientists can do right now is make good maps of fault zones and figure out which ones are probably due for rupture. And they can make forecasts. Turning forecasts into predictions may be impossible, but scientists are doing everything they can to solve the mysteries of earthquakes."

Quakes follow pattern

That's "very true," according to Solidum. Like their foreign counterparts, Phivolcs scientists also make maps of rocks and other things to see where the ground had shaken in the past, and how hard.

"In Japan, government scientists say they have settled the question (on the predictability of earthquakes)," the National Geographic said. "Earthquakes are not random. They follow a pattern. They have detectable precursors. The government knows where Japan's big one will most likely strike. This is a country where the trains run on time and earthquakes are supposed to do the same."

Prepare in advance

Here, earthquake prediction is "still a problem for us," Solidum admitted.

He said that after the 1990 quake, Phivolcs conducted an initial study on what might happen in Metro Manila in terms of the impact of the different hazards posed by earthquakes, "like ground shaking, ground rupture and tsunamis."

Phivolcs followed that up in 2002 with a study of more detailed estimates of earthquake impacts and a master plan on reducing such impacts.

The agency is currently developing a tsunami sensor with funding from Finland.

"Technologically, we can't beat the arrival of a tsunami. So it's important that we advocate a community-based warning system," Solidum said.

He said: "We cannot predict when an earthquake will actually take place, but we know where that earthquake will be generated by mapping the country's quake generators. We trust they will not move at the same time. The best thing to do is to prepare in advance."

With a report from Christine O. Avendaño

5.3 quake in Babuyan

AN EARTHQUAKE MEASURING 5.3 on the Richter scale jolted the northern Philippines at 5 p.m. on Sunday with no report of damage or injuries, an official said.

The epicenter was located about 125 km northeast of Laoag in Ilocos Norte.

"The quake happened near the sparsely inhabited Babuyan Islands," said Robert Tiglao of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology. "Earthquakes of this size are considered quite normal here in the Philippines."

On Saturday, a quake hit the Indonesian island of Java, killing about 3,800 people. *AFP*

Some of the destructive earthquakes the country has experienced

Date	Epicenter	Intensity	Surface magnitude	Death toll/injured
Nov 15, 1994	North of Mindoro	RF 8	7.1	78/430
Jul 16, 1990	Nueva Ecija	RF 8	7.8	1,283/2,786
Aug17, 1976	Moro Gulf	RF 7	7.9	3,739/8,000
Mar 17. 1973	Ragay Gulf	RF 7	7.0	14/over 100
Apr 07, 1970	Baler, Quezon	RF 7	7.3	15/200
Aug 02, 1968	Aurora	RF 7	7.3	270/600
Apr 01, 1955	Lanao del Sur	RF 7	7.6	291/713
Jul 02, 1954	Sorsogon	RF 7	6.5	13/101

IN THE KNOW

Tracing faults

FAULTS ARE BREAKS OR ZONES OF weakness in rocks along which displacements occur, causing earthquakes. They may extend for kilometers across the earth's surface or tens of kilometers under it.

Earthquake generators are plate interactions, displacements along the Philippine fault zone and movements along other active faults.

The other active faults in the Philippines are Digdig in Aurora; Lupao, which runs from Nueva Ecija to Pangasinan; San Manuel in Pangasinan; Aglubang River in Mindoro; Tablas off Panay and Marinduque islands; and Casiguran, which runs parallel to the East Luzon Trough and Mindanao.

The country's other earthquake generators include the Philippine Trench, East Luzon Trough, Manila Trench, Negros Trench, Sulu Trench, Cotabato Trench, Davao Trench, and the collisional zones between Palawan and Mindoro, the Zamboanga Peninsula and Western Mindanao.

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65 Pinoys bring home tales of terror

From page A1

Maniago, who worked as a welder in East Timor for three years, was in the first batch of Filipino evacuees to flee the Timorese capital of Dili.

The evacuees included two young girls and an infant.

First to disembark from a Philippine Air Force C-130 at Villamor Air Base was Rosalie Alvarado, who carried her month-old daughter, Rowena, in her arms.

Tears flow

Alvarado's tears flowed as she was met by President Macapagal-Arroyo, who welcomed the evacuees home.

Ms Arroyo paid particular attention to the mother and child, urging Alvarado to take her lunch so that she could breast-feed Rowena.

In Dili itself, hundreds of UN employees were evacuated as rival gangs roamed the streets of the capital, torching homes and battling with machetes in defiance of foreign peacekeepers sent to quell the violence that has plunged the fledgling country into chaos.

Tens of thousands of residents also fled Dili or sought refuge in churches, embassies and at the airport, leaving much of the city deserted.

Smoke billowed from several areas where attacks were taking place. Australian troops rumbled toward the sound of gunfire in tanks and armored personnel carriers, but seemed to only briefly scatter combatants, according to The Associated Press.

Alvarado, a mother of six, worked part time in Dili, doing different jobs for four years. Her child's father, also a Filipino, stayed behind.

"I won't be going back there," said Alvarado, a native of Porac, Pampanga.

Many of the returnees described the situation in Dili as nothing short of terrifying. They stayed inside their homes, not daring to go out lest they got caught in the crossfire.

Burning houses

"In our street, I saw people chasing each other with machetes: Three houses were burned there and four people perished in one," Adelyn Pascual, who said she worked at Dili's Ministry for Planning and Finance, told AP Television News.

At night, Pascual said she saw smoke and burning buildings, then she would see bodies sprawled near gutted buildings in the morning. She said while foreigners were not targeted, they could still be hurt in the clashes.

"You can't really avoid bullets because bullets couldn't distinguish from foreigners," she said.

"We couldn't do anything but to leave before we got hurt in the chaos. Something bad could happen to us," said Manuel Cruz, an engineer in Dili.

There are about 200 Filipinos working in East Timor as engineers, nongovernment organization volunteers and Christian missionaries.

A Filipino couple said that they had to lie on the floor inside their Dili apartment to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

The husband, who requested anonymity, said his Korean coworker was hit in the neck by a wayward bullet while peeking through his apartment window.

"That's how dangerous the situation there is," he said. "That's why when we were informed that the Philippine government would be sending a C-130 to have us evacuated, we immediately took it."

Text messages helped

He said the Filipinos were immediately informed by the Philippine Embassy of the evacuation plan through an efficient text network.

"They work fast there," he said of the embassy staff led by Ambassador Farita Aguilucho-Ong.

His wife had been there only a week for a visit when the violence erupted. He had been working in Dili for the last five years as a consultant in the country's Department of Education.

Jun Clomera, a 38-year-old engineer, said that even if the foreigners were not the direct targets in the strife, he chose not to step outside his house.

"Our movement there was limited because you really don't know what will happen next. The situation was very uncertain because there would be violence one day, things would cool down the next, then you'd hear rumors of attacks again," Clomera said.

Clomera had been working in Dili for a Japanese company for a year and a half.

Some 110 other Filipinos, including those working with the United Nations, had chosen to stay behind, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Among them was Fernando Flores, a Baptist pastor doing missionary work in Samanatuto, outside Dili.

"He decided to stay behind because he could not leave the many people we had taught," his wife, Jeannie, said.

Jeannie, 34, said she and her husband decided that she should go home with their daughters, aged nine and eight.

"We've seen buildings being burned down. It's just not safe for our girls," Jeannie said.

The couple had been doing missionary work in East Timor for the last six years. They were sent there by their church, the Lapasan Baptist Church, based in Cagayan de Oro City.

A C-130 remains on standby in case a second evacuation is needed, Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos Jr. said.

"We are watching the situation very, very closely," Conejos said.

Conejos also said Chief Insp. Edgar Layon, who was shot in the stomach during a clash among East Timores, remained in stable condition in a private hospital in Darwin, Australia.

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Goodbye, dear nurses

EDITORIAL

THE US SENATE HAS JUST PASSED AN IMMIGRATION bill that, among other provisions, lifts the limit on the number of foreign nurses who can immigrate to the United States. To be sure, the bill faces strong opposition from the US House of Representatives, and the provision lifting the cap on the number of special visas for nurses is not even on the counterpart House bill.

It looks unlikely that the provision, as phrased, will make it into law. But the possibility of the flow of US-bound Filipino nurses turning into a flood does exist, if not now, then when the nursing shortage in the United States becomes especially acute. Are we ready for it?

According to The New York Times, the shortfall of registered nurses in the United States reached 118,000 last April. In 2002, the US government estimated that the shortfall will hit 800,000 by 2020. It must have been numbers as dire as these that prompted Sen. Sam Brownback to sponsor the proposal. Last week, he told the media he did not expect the provision to drain African countries of their nurses; but he admitted that the impact on the nursing professions in the Philippines and India could be considerable.

The Philippines already sends several thousand nurses to the United States every year; in fact—though you wouldn't know it from watching the cluttered emergency rooms in the medical dramas of American TV—it is the United States' biggest source of foreign nurses. A registered nurse can expect to earn some $36,000 a year in the United States (about P1.9 million), Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan told The New York Times. In contrast, a nurse can expect to earn $2,000 in the Philippines (about P106,000, or less than P9,000 a month). Given these numbers, an open-door policy for foreign nurses can only bring more applicants to America's doorstep.

But if the Philippine health care system is already under heavy strain because several thousand nurses leave for abroad every year, that same open-door policy may actually force the system's collapse. "The Filipino people will suffer because the US will get all our trained nurses," George Cordero, president of the Philippine Nursing Association, told The New York Times. "But what can we do?"

What can we do, indeed? The British, who have shown the way in condoning developing-economy debt, are pushing the envelope in the nursing issue too. They have allotted about £100 million to "compensate" their main sources of foreign nurses, in Africa. The money can go to develop more nurses, perhaps to meet national needs, or at least to make sure that the goose that lays the golden egg stays reasonably healthy.

The US Senate immigration bill carries no provision on compensation. It seems to be based on a classic economic assumption: Let the market decide. If the United States offers both opportunity and income, other countries will simply have to grin and bear it. We say "seem" because the economics behind the provision is actually highly selective.

While the American Hospital Association welcomes the possibility of more foreign nurses, the American Nurses Association opposes it. Granted, a large part of the opposition is based on simple fear; more foreign nurses will mean fewer American ones. But American nurses also oppose the provision because it is a short-term and simple-minded solution to the health care problem.

"We're disappointed that Congress, instead of providing appropriations for domestic nursing programs, is outsourcing the education of nurses," Erin McKeon, the nursing group's associate director of government affairs, told The New York Times. According to the National League for Nursing, some 155,000 qualified Americans who applied for nursing school were turned down in 2005. Why? Not enough schools, not enough slots.

Instead of the US economy repairing the problem by investing money in new nursing schools and more nursing teachers, with higher pay (teachers earn less than the nursing students they turn out), the US government settles for the easy answer—and consequences in the developing world be damned.

We are loathe to see travel restrictions imposed on Filipinos of high ability and solid ambition. But when our hospitals can no longer function because most of our nurses are in the United States, such drastic measures may be necessary. It is in our best interest that we both prepare for that eventuality and prevent it from coming to pass.

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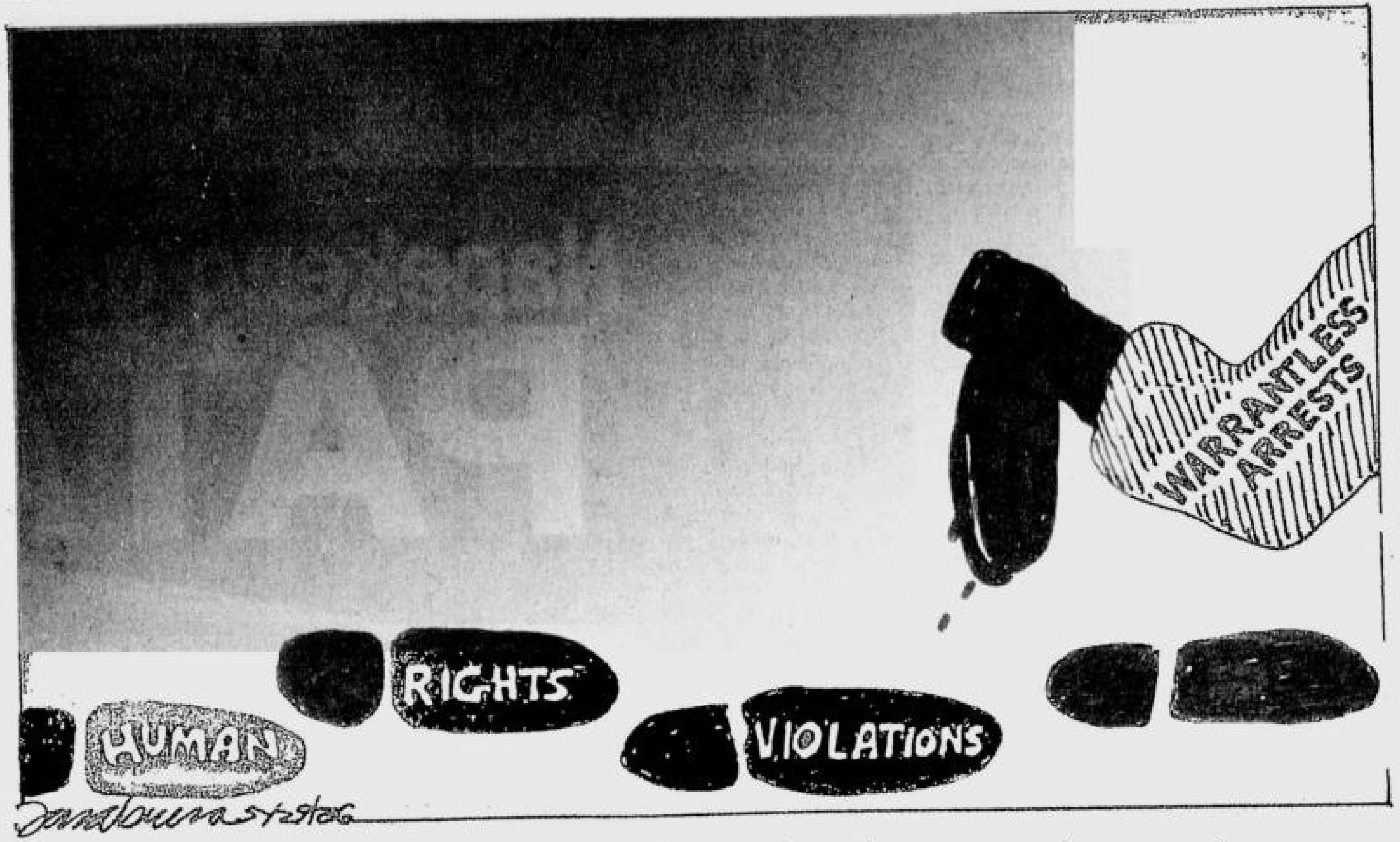


More mysteries in botched Masinloc sale

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

IN A PREVIOUS COLUMN, (PDI, 5/19/06) I narrated how the greed and naiveté of the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) are making the National Power Corp's assets, which are being privatized, easy prey to shysters.

On Dec. 1, 2004, PSALM bid out the 600-megawatt Masinloc coal-powered plant. YNN Pacific Consortium won the bid at $582 million. To close the deal, the winning bidder must pay up-front 40 percent of the bid price ($222 million of the $582 million), plus a performance bond of $11.2 million. In case the bidder does not come up with the down payment, PSALM can confiscate the bond.

When the deadline for the payment came (Dec. 2, 2005), YNN could not fork out the needed cash; its reputed Australian partner could not be found. PSALM could have confiscated the $11.2-million performance bond then. But for some strange reason, PSALM extended the deadline for three months—to March 31, 2006, although, under the bid documents or under the law, there was no basis for the grant of the extension.

The new deadline, March 31, 2006, came and went but still there was no payment from YNN. For a second time, PSALM could have seized the bond. But again, PSALM gave YNN another 90-day extension, or until the end of June 2006. YNN also offered to increase the value of the performance bond by $3 million, to $14.2 million, as penalty for the delay in the payment of the $222 million. A new partner, Ranhill Berhad of Malaysia, was reported to have assumed the obligation to pay both the $222 million down payment and the $14.2-million bond; although, again, Ranhill's takeover from YNN's original Australian partner was not sanctioned by PSALM's bidding rules. Not only that, Ranhill slipped in an additional condition to the effectivity of the $14.2-million bond: that Masinloc be first assured of a supply contract with Meralco.

Meralco has nothing to do with it, and a supply contract was not part of the conditions of the bidding. If it were, PSALM could have attracted more and better bids. The government cannot force Meralco to sign a supply contract with Masinloc. Considering the high price, this would result in very high power rates for consumers. Ranhill is trying to change the conditions of the already-concluded bidding.

PSALM had until last weekend to accept or reject Ranhill's unusual proposal. As if it had a choice. The Asset Purchase Agreement (APA) for Masinloc provides that the performance bond cannot, under any circumstance, be made subject to any condition. PSALM's only logical course of action was to reject the proposal, confiscate the original $11.2-million bond, and hold another public bidding.

PSALM's strange behavior is wrecking the credibility of the government's privatization process. Why is PSALM like this?

To find out, let's take a closer look at the people and circumstances behind this botched deal. YNN's local shareholder (let's call him "Mr. A") happens to be a distributor of wires and cables sold to power utilities like Meralco. His YNN Holding Corp. also happens to be the 60-percent owner of Duracom Mobile Power Corp., a small 108-MW barge-mounted independent power producer (IPP) in Navotas, selling power to Meralco. His partner in Duracom is East Asia Power Resources Corp., owned in turn by the American El Paso Energy. At the time the partnership was signed in 1993, the president and part-owner of East Asia's Philippine operations was none other than "Mr. B" who is now a ranking official of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

The partnership of Mr. A and Mr. B was further cemented when they brought into the picture another 108-MW barge. The sister company was called the East Asia Diesel Power Corp. Documents exposed by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile in the Senate showed Mr. B agreeing to pay Mr. A commissions running up to about 15-21 centavos per kWh, or as high as P150-P200 million per year, and a success fee of US$3 million for securing contracts for the additional capacity.

The relationship between Mr. A and Mr. B is still alive and well, and it manifested itself during the Masinloc saga.

Where it gets even stickier is how Mr. B appears to be helping his friend from his position in the ERC. The first time this happened was when Duracom applied for and was granted by the ERC a 20-percent increase in tariff rates. This effectively gave Duracom an additional P20 million in revenues per month.

More recent incidents seemed to have been carefully calibrated to force Meralco to sign a contract with YNN. Last Dec. 22, 2004, the ERC issued guidelines titled "Amendment to the Guidelines for the Recovery of Costs for the Generation Component of the Distribution Utilities Rates." The title sounds like a mouthful, but in a nutshell it had the effect of requiring distribution utilities, like Meralco, to certify that they have conducted public biddings in the procurement of new power supply contracts with generation companies.

This was seen as a move to protect consumers. Immediately thereafter, several utilities dutifully complied and publicized their upcoming requirements for power supply.

But two weeks ago, on May 10, 2006, the ERC again baffled the power industry by issuing Resolution No. 21. Although there had been no complaints, the ERC suspended transparent public bidding for utilities procuring their power supplies. The resolution used some lame excuse: the guidelines were temporarily being shelved because they forgot to hold public hearings on them. Is this freeze meant to conveniently open a window for Mr. A and YNN to sign a sweetheart deal with Meralco? Only three out of the five commissioners signed Resolution No. 21.

'Hao-siao'

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

RAUL GONZALEZ SAYS AIRILY THAT GOVernment is amenable to allowing media practitioners to carry guns to solve the problem of their becoming an endangered species. But first, he says, media should get rid of its "*hao siao*" journalists or the poseurs and mercenaries working only for money.

Joel Sy Egco, president of the Association of Responsible Media, is elated by this. The Palace announcement, he says, is "most welcome." "Finally, they have come to their senses and have heeded our call to give us a fighting chance when confronted with a violent situation." He agrees that "media is also responsible to police our ranks and get rid of the bad eggs or irresponsible journalists."

What thoroughly idiotic things to say. Have we lost all our senses?

To begin with, if arming journalists is the solution to their current decimation, why not arm activists, too? It's not just the journalists that are being slaughtered like chickens in this country, as one activist puts it, it's the activists too. Indeed, more the activists than the journalists, the murder of activists now having reached a mind-boggling near one-a-day. Why not allow them to carry .45s as well? Or since they're fairer game than the others, Armalites and other high-powered weapons to defend themselves from the murderous?

Indeed, why not arm the ordinary citizens who are victims also of murder and sundry mayhem? Why not arm the *balut* vendors who are robbed by *istambays*, and fast-food women workers who work at night and raped by thugs, and who may not report the crimes to cops for fear of being robbed or raped twice? What is the argument here, that only privileged classes or professions deserve to have the means to defend themselves?

But more than this, where does government, even if it takes the face of the braggart Gonzalez, get off exuding this airiness? Government is responsible for these killings, by commission and omission, by active encouragement and encouraging passivity, by commanding irresponsibility and command responsibility. The Commission on Human Rights and Amnesty International are right about that. The head of that government should be feeling deeply guilty and ashamed of herself, and her justice secretary should be feeling like an absolute failure, if not an irremediable fool. For them to now say that, out of the goodness of their hearts, they are allowing journalists to arm themselves is breathtaking cheekiness. And that on the condition that journalists first behave by ridding their ranks of scalawags, broadly hinting that the victims also brought the mayhem upon themselves!

At the very least, Gonzalez is the last person to be talking about fake and genuine. Never mind that he cannot tell real justice from a fake one, mind only that he cannot tell a real President from a fake one. Never mind that he cannot tell legitimate grievance from a fake one, mind only that he cannot tell a legitimate government from an illegitimate one. By all means let us remove the *hao-siao* journalists in our midst. But first, let us remove a *hao-siao* President—and her *hao-siao* Cabinet—from our gaze.

While at this, it should be the easiest thing in the world to remove the *hao-siao* journalists in this country. Gonzalez himself knows who they are. They are the poseurs, mercenaries and quacks in the administration's payroll.

I can never sufficiently belabor my arguments about why arming journalists is the most stupid thing in the world. On the part of the journalists, arming them is at the very least useless. You arm journalists, all you'll succeed in doing is add to their assassins' arsenal after they've been shot in the back. At the very most, you arm journalists, you make them a menace to society. As it is, this country is already crawling with abusive journalists who have gunpowder for brains, and not all of them will fall into Gonzalez's category of *hao-siao* since they are regarded as legitimate journalists by an illegitimate government and by corrupt, if not illegitimate, media organizations. You make them paranoid further with the threat of motorcycle-riding assassins waiting to waylay them and you are going to have a lot of KFC, Jollibee and Pizza Hut delivery boys littering the pavement with their bodies.

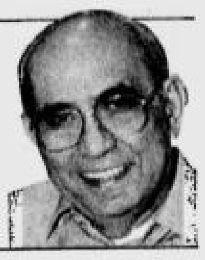
But more than that, you arm journalists—and go on to praise the GMA government for it—you add to the mind-boggling crime of journalists being slaughtered wholesale in our midst the even more mind-boggling crime of freeing that government from blame.

It's not just that this government is guilty of dereliction of duty. Though that is a mind-boggling crime by itself. Any government that has a record of journalists—and activists—being murdered on this scale has forfeited its right to exist even if it were an elected one, and this one isn't so. It voids all pretensions to democratic rule completely. The protection of the right to free speech includes keeping the speakers alive. There's no democracy when the State says, "By all means talk, but *bahala ka sa buhay mo*" (completely literally, your life is your own lookout).

But more than dereliction of duty, the government is directly, immediately and implacably guilty of the slaughter of the journalists. You do not stop mayhem of this scale, you do not just tolerate it, you encourage it. You keep harassing media, accusing the industry's practitioners of sedition and threatening them with all sorts of reprisal, you do not just encourage it, you suggest it. You keep complaining loudly to your thugs about journalists the way Henry II complained loudly to his lieutenants about Thomas à Becket saying, "Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?" you do not just suggest it, you demand it.

Under this regime, the only things left that are real are corpses. Everything else is *hao-siao*.

My Charter change credo



SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

IN THE ONGOING DEBATE ABOUT CHARTER change, there are two issues which may be blocking the rational discussion of each. These are (1) the legality of the procedure, and (2) the wisdom of the changes being proposed.

I believe that before we can effectively discuss the wisdom of the changes being proposed, we should first settle the issue of the legality of the procedure. For as long as this latter issue is not cleared, current advocates of Charter change will continue to face inhospitable reception.

About legality, there are two propositions which I believe are unassailable and which are responsible for much of the inhospitable reception of the proposed changes.

First, there can be no Charter change without the participation of the Senate. We can debate about the manner or extent of Senate participation, but the Senate cannot be excluded altogether. This is because Charter change proposals have been committed by the Constitution to Congress, which is a bicameral body.

Second, until an initiative and referendum law is passed for Charter change, neither amendment nor revision may be proposed by initiative and referendum. This is because the Supreme Court has said so, through Santiago v. Comelec, in 1997.

Now the debatable parts.

First, the Senate's participation. There are two arguable ways in which this can be satisfied. One (which I prefer) I would call strict, and the other minimalist. Strict participation means that three-fourths of the Senate should vote in favor of any proposed change. But a minimalist approach would say that if at least a majority of the Senate should vote in favor, the needed Senate participation would be satisfied. However, if separate voting is required—and I maintain it is—the minimalist approach would not satisfy the three-fourths language of the Constitution.

As to initiative and referendum, we can debate on whether the changes sponsored by Sigaw ng Bayan constitute mere amendments or a revision. But the fact is: there is no enabling law for either amendment or revision. The decision of the Court on this issue became final in 1997 and the Court no longer has jurisdiction to review that decision today. A new law must be passed.

We can kid ourselves with the kindergarten argument that the individual sections being proposed by Sigaw, taken by themselves, are mere amendments; but it would make no difference. There is no enabling law. Period. I cannot see how it can be any clearer.

Now let us talk about joint session or no joint session. Under the 1935 Constitution, the law was very clear. Congress had to be in joint session for purposes of proposing amendments. Thus, to be able to propose amendments, the two houses had to be in joint session. In other words, Congress then was a constituent assembly, that is, an assembly empowered to propose amendments, **only if in joint session**. The text was clear: "Congress in joint session assembled . . ."

The present Constitution does not say anything about a joint session. It simply says that Congress may propose amendments. This means that even now, without a joint session, Congress is already a constituent assembly empowered to propose amendments. The only question is how.

May the two houses come together in joint session for purposes of discussing Charter change? There is no prohibition against that. Does the bicameral character of Congress prohibit joint discussion? I answer with another question: Does the bicameral character of Congress prohibit bicameral conference committees? It does not because the decision of the bicameral committee has to be confirmed by each House. So, too, for as long as the two houses decide separately, there is no offense to the bicameral nature of Congress.

But if in joint session, why may they not vote jointly? The reason is that Congress is a bicameral body and was made such after an intense debate in the 1986 Constitutional Commission. Why bother separating the two if they can act jointly on their own whim?

Since there is no provision commanding the two houses to come together, how then are they to proposes changes? Since 1997, I have been espousing the proposition that they can propose amendments and revision where they are as they are. Once a Charter change is approved by a three-fourths vote of one house, it can be transmitted to the other house for similar action. There is no prohibition against that.

However, I would not give this process the misleading name of **legislative process** because it is not legislation subject to the rules of the legislative process. I would call it a **constituent process**, a process *sui generis*, and both houses would have to devise the rules for such process. The Constitution leaves the devising of procedural rules to a Constitutional Convention. So, too, it does for Congress as a constituent assembly provided that the rules do not transgress the bicameral character of Congress.

I realize that things would have been much simpler if the 1986 Constitutional Commission had simply copied the provision of the 1935 Constitution. But, let's face it, the Commission failed to do so. We are thus faced with a provision on Charter change which challenges our skills at constitutional construction. Indeed, it was an oversight. *Nostra culpa*. But we can also look at it, if you wish, as the 1986 Constitutional Commission's act of faith in the construing skills of those who would be charged with implementing the Constitution.

Decoded by SM

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Montalvan II

MUCH ADO OVER NOTHING. THIS IS WHAT many have come to conclude in their judgment of the movie version of "The Da Vinci Code."

But last week, a reader's letter in my mailbox said something about the decision of SM not to show the movie in its malls, wherever they may be located in the country. The SM Cinemas comprise 40 percent of the movie theaters in the country.

SM, as a policy, does not show R-18 movies, or those commonly rated "for adults only" in its malls. The reason for this, SM explained, is that SM malls are meant to cater to the family. When the SM management announced this policy a few years ago, it was met with praise by family advocates.

This time around, it is the only business enterprise—a major one at that—to ignore the lure of huge earnings dangled by a well-publicized movie that promises to be a box-office hit.

But there is something profound behind SM's decision to ban the movie. Reportedly, the decision was prompted by the presence of the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament on the 5th floor of the SM Megamall in Mandaluyong City. The management saw the paradox of adoring Christ while desecrating Him as something that was simply untenable.

If you look very closely, there is something here that SM has just set as an example for other similar business establishments to emulate, especially those involved in visual entertainment, including television networks and cable television companies.

Catholic American lay deacon Barth E. Bracy, who is based in Manila, discusses the wisdom behind the SM decision, which is largely attributed to Ms Fely Sy, wife of tycoon Henry Sy. Here are excerpts from Bracy's letter:

"While the stance of Mr. Sy is remarkable in an age when most businessmen, Catholic or otherwise, make decisions solely according to anticipated earnings, what I find most inspiring is the reasoning upon which his stance is based. His reasoning is so lucid that even the most crass anti-Catholic bigot must concede the point, namely, that the adoration of Jesus and desecration of Jesus, together with indifference thereto, stand in mutual opposition ....

"Mr. Sy's admirably clear reasoning confirmed my prior suspicion that the Da Vinci Desecration is in fact apocalyptic, with a little "a," even if (perhaps?) not with a big "A." To wit, an apocalypse, properly speaking, is a revelation that the light of Christ and the darkness of evil stand so opposed that there is absolutely nothing in common between them. By demarcating the two positions as contradictory, and leaving no middle ground, an apocalypse forces people to take a stand on one or the other side. The reasoning of Mr. Sy is instructive as it reveals that these two positions are precisely characterized by adoration on the one side and desecration or indifference on the other.

"This apocalyptic understanding should be a clarion call for Christians everywhere to wake up and smell the coffee!

"Anyone involved in making or promoting the Da Vinci Desecration, whether they want to believe it or not, has spat directly on the Divine Face of Christ. Owners of cinemas and bookstores who consider themselves Christians and have yet profited from the book or film have committed the sin of Judas. While we might lovingly correct these people where possible, it is **imperative** that we make **reparation** to the Heart of Christ for these outrages.

"Many who consider themselves Christians apparently find the film entertaining even while, presumably, not believing its deceptions. A simple hypothetical question gives the lie to this pseudo-position: Might one conceivably find entertainment value in a film that depicts one's own mother as a prostitute, murderer, liar and thief? The point is as compelling as it is clear: If you can read this book or watch this film without being outraged, you simply do not love Jesus! Even though you did not spit on His face as did those who made, promoted and profited from the film, He will spit you out of His mouth for being lukewarm! While we might fraternally correct these people, accordingly it is **most imperative** that we make **reparation** to the Heart of Christ for the lack of outrage that bears witness to their pathetically lukewarm hearts."

Bracy then proposes his idea of how to make reparation, along with his and his group's campaign to promote chapels of adoration, which they have been doing in Manila and in many other places for some time now. Finally he ends:

"It has been well said that evil triumphs only when good men and women fail in their duty to stand up for the good! This article is not intended to give you warm fuzzy feelings but to incite you to action! The action I propose is precise and potent."

It took SM to tell us that the truth cannot be "relativized."

* * *

Comments to monta@cu-cdo.edu.ph

Futile flags

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

ON OCT. 14, 1943, IN FRONT OF THE LEGISLAtive Building, Jose P. Laurel was inaugurated president of the Japanese-sponsored Republic of the Philippines. The ceremony was, in many respects, identical to the ceremonies inaugurating the Commonwealth of the Philippines some eight years earlier.

Like his predecessor, Laurel wore a cutaway. A Filipino—not foreign—prelate gave the invocation. And, according to one eyewitness, the crowd counted the exact number of cannon shots that boomed after President Laurel took his oath of office—in a sense, echoing the resentment over the American decision to grant only 19 guns in 1935. This time, Laurel was honored with a 21-gun salute.

And this time, the Philippine flag was hoisted to fly alone, as befitted a sovereign nation, which was what the Japanese said the Philippines had become.

An eyewitness, Antonio M. Molina, a teacher at San Juan de Letran, later described the event in his memoirs. Among other things, he wrote:

"Some five minutes before ten o'clock Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo and Gen. Artemio Ricarte, both of our defunct Revolutionary Government of 1898, hoisted the Philippine Flag in the huge staff, to the tune of our national anthem, both hitherto banned. This time the applause was deafening. For my part, I must confess that I was unable to restrain some tears, even as I felt a knot in the throat. They were, indeed, the expression of the conflicting sentiments that assaulted me: on the one hand, the irrepressible satisfaction upon seeing our national flag flutter alone, at long last, and, on the other hand, the fear of the shame that we might be making this flag participate in such sickening histrionic exhibition. I was somewhat comforted, however, upon recalling that, allegedly upon the suggestion of the Filipino leader, Manuel Roxas, the navy blue of our flag—'the good, the genuine' as Spanish poet Peman would say—had been substituted by a pale sky blue and that the proportion of the triangle dimensions in relation to the rest of the flag had been altered. This was the subliminal message of our protest, whereof the Japanese remained unaware, to make manifest that our people are far from being gullible in the least." (Incidentally, the large Philippine flag hoisted during the Commonwealth inaugural was donated by General Ricarte.)

There seems to be no other record of Manuel Roxas having suggested the substitution of the flag's dark blue previously in use with the pale blue; what seems more probable is that Aguinaldo and Ricarte used flags with the same specifications as those of the flag in Malolos.

Forty-five years earlier, on Feb. 4, 1899, General Aguinaldo, in the name of the Republic and the people he headed, declared war against the United States. The Filipino flag was flown with the red field up, to show that a state of hostility existed. With the the capture of Aguinaldo in 1901, which signaled the defeat of the Malolos Republic, the Filipino flag was displaced by the Stars and Stripes.

In 1907, as the elections for the First Philippine Assembly heated up, Fernando Ma. Guerrero, journalist and poet, decided to run as a candidate in Manila. Guerrero wanted to be a candidate of the Gran Partido Nacionalista, but he and Justo Lukban, were not nominated by the party to be its official candidates for the south and north districts of Manila. Guerrero and his supporters decided to walk out of the Gran Partido Nacionalista convention. Guerrero then set up the Liga Popular Nacionalista and won an overwhelming victory.

As one of Guerrero's young supporters, Teodoro M. Kalaw, later wrote, "During the tumultuous celebration of his [Guerrero's] victory, the Filipino flag was very openly displayed, and with great emotion. In contrast, the American flag received very little attention. Many American officers considered this an aspersion cast on the American sovereignty of the Islands. As a consequence, the Civil Commission, a few days later, declared illegal the display of the Filipino flag, and, in general, the use of any emblem used in the Revolution."

This was the Flag Law of Aug. 23, 1907.

Filipinos never gave up their loyalty to their flag; the national colors were used in *zarzuelas* in the costumes of actresses as an allegory of the real thing. People continued to hope that their flag would be hoisted in public once again.

On Oct. 30, 1919, Francis Burton Harrison signed into law the Philippine Legislature's Act repealing the Flag Law. The bill had been sponsored by Sen. Rafael Palma.

General Aguinaldo, in quiet retirement, made a statement and said:

"The most historic Filipino flag was the one we raised in Kawit, Cavite, it having been recognized and saluted by the American squadron. It was the same flag that we used in Malolos, Bulacan, and was defended by our hosts [and] which, I believe, was finally deposited in the caves of the northern Carballo mountains in Nueva Vizcaya."

Like the flags of other nations, our flag has evolved over time. That evolution has added meaning to the flag. The latest change to the flag was the restoration of the Malolos colors—sort of, because the original sketch attached to our Proclamation of Independence seems to have been lost—in 1998, which I opposed at the time on the basis of evolution (two generations had grown up with the navy blue in our flag) and practicality (the new shades of blue and red would be difficult to standardize). The effort proved to be a failure—for a simple reason: It is virtually impossible to obtain the right, official colors on canvas, and impossible to make them on nylon; not to mention the absence of the necessary source materials for comparing and approving dyes. Which means flag makers "make do" with shades of blue and red that aren't what the law mandates. The flags of today thus represent the futility of our legal system.

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph/blog

Volcanic changes

COMMENTARY

Kate Villaruz

BEHOLDEN. THIS WAS HOW I FELT WHEN I SAW THE Mayon Volcano. Majestic and mystifying from every angle, Mayon is a distinguishing landmark in the province of Albay. The volcano is also known to be a bountiful giver of life and a perilous and intimidating masterpiece of God.

This remarkable volcano served as the inspiring backdrop for the Mentoring the Mentors seminar-workshop held in the town of Guinobatan from April 24-27, 2006. The seminar-workshop had 39 participants, including highly esteemed principals and master teachers. As one of its facilitators, I watched in awe how the participants assimilated attributes of their beloved volcano into their lives.

During those four days, these Bicolanos oozed with passion and exploded with determination to champion a cause and work for a change in our country through another kind of revolution—the Education Revolution.

From the start of the seminar, the participants gradually realized the need for a change in their attitude toward the challenges of their work and the importance of their profession in social transformation. They shared earnestly felt experiences—from feeling desperate due to lack of school supplies and facilities to stress caused by intrigues and politics.

However, "*Kambio sa pananaw*" from an "*Akin*" to an "*Atin*" mentality became the dictum of these educators. Eventually, initiative, cooperation and responsibility were voluntarily offered as the best "means" with which to hurdle the stumbling blocks they've faced or might yet encounter in the future.

On the second day, issues concerning their main clientele—the children—took center-stage. The participants acknowledged their crucial role in the task of shaping the character of the young. Through various activities, such as sharing personal experiences as an educator and watching the movie, "Emperor's Club," the participants were reminded to respect the giftedness and uniqueness of every individual.

More significantly, they were encouraged to "walk their talk" in trying to live out values that would turn the young into responsible citizens. I personally handled this part of the seminar, and it was very inspiring to see the participants respond and express their renewed zeal for the teaching profession and their new sense of hope for the country.

By the third and fourth day, the participants, like the active Mayon, were flowing with energy. The free exchange of stories, laughters and songs, coupled with their dynamism, showed how they had come to feel at ease with each other. A sense of camaraderie was evident as they felt assured in the knowledge that they shared the same purpose.

The modules on "Leadership for Service," "The Art of Loving," "Designing Effective Instruction," "Teaching and Learning Strategies" further reinforced their sense of mission and inspired them to take on a more defined role as movers and shakers of this new kind of revolution. By the end of the seminar-workshop, the participants were bursting with excitement about their action plans even as they declared their commitment to bring about changes in their spheres of influence.

As a volunteer facilitator of the Mentoring the Mentors program, my experience in Albay deepened even more my commitment to the cause of Education Revolution.

In these trying times, when we Filipinos are desperately searching for heroes willing and ready to sincerely and fearlessly stand up for our country, I was fortunate enough to meet Bicolano principals and master teachers who possessed the humility and willingness to create the needed change in themselves first before attempting to change others. They exemplified heroism—the courage to fight for our country, the Philippines—not through protests, rallies or impeachment, but by the simple pursuit of their mission to educate and give hope to the youth, through role-modeling.

The most powerful volcanic eruptions have been known to begin with the most subtle seismic movements. While it may take time to see the effects of Education Revolution in Albay, there are now 39 Bicolanos who have committed to the cause and who are willing to work tirelessly to make a difference in the province. I am confident we will soon be witnesses to the fruits of their labor, which will explode and create lasting changes not just in Albay but in the entire nation.

(You may send your comments to the author at mentor@fwwpp.org.)

Kate Villaruz is a volunteer facilitator for the Foundation for Worldwide People Power's Mentoring the Mentors Program. She is a high school history teacher at Assumption College San Lorenzo.

IN THE NEWS

Eduardo Ermita

The INQUIRER is a member of the
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Public servants support CESB

WE IN THE CONFEDERATION OF Independent Unions in the Public Sector (CIU), an umbrella organization of 170 workers' unions in national government agencies, government-owned and -controlled corporations, local government units and state universities and colleges, express our grave concern over the Arroyo administration's apparent bullying of the Career Executive Service Board.

We view this "uncivil war"—as the May 11 editorial of the INQUIRER put it—as a serious threat not only to third-level government personnel but also to rank-and-file employees. We cannot ignore Malacañang and its Cabinet's transgressions of civil service laws, rules and traditions, as enumerated in CESB Resolution No. 619, just to yield the way for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's favorite "let's move on" line.

How can the goal of professionalizing the bureaucracy be achieved when the recruitment and appointment of public officials are neither based on merit and fitness nor done by a politically neutral body or individual? No way can we allow this betrayal of our rights to go on!

Ms Arroyo is wont to quote her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal: "Respect the bureaucracy, respect the civil service." But even as she speaks these words and trims down the bureaucracy, she continues to create new offices and appoint "excess" undersecretaries and assistant secretaries who are not even career executive eligibles. Supposedly, they serve at the pleasure of the President, but definitely at the expense of legitimate and principled officers.

We in the career service are here to serve the public, not to please politicians. CIU's opinion is that Civil Service Commission Chair Katrina David and executive director Mary Ann Fernandez-Mendoza et al. are being subjected to harassment and vindictiveness for defending the right of Cesos (career executive service officers) to security of tenure.

Some lines from the 1961 campaign speech of President Macapagal may yet stir awake a sleeping conscience: "The primary and fundamental need of this nation is moral leadership. The state of corruption in the public service depends upon the personal deals and examples of the highest official of the land.

"For my part, I seek nothing for myself or for my family.

"I seek the presidency with clean hands and an unimpeachable public record of rectitude."

With these words in mind, we in the CIU strongly and fully support the CESB and its Resolution No. 619. We call all employees' organizations in the government to stay vigilant in order to defend and preserve the strong foundations of a professional bureaucracy.

Mabuhay ang mga manggagawa sa gobyerno!

—EMAKO MERCEDITA O. NALDOZA,
national chair,
Confederation of Independent Unions
in the Public Sector,
Rm. 301 Rosario Bldg.,
Scout Chuatoco St.,
Roxas District, Quezon City

Learning from the parliament of the streets

THIS REFERS TO THE COLUMN, "Batasan 5: Where's the mass base?" by Honesto General. (PDI, 5/15/06) General suggested that "most of the marchers looked like students cutting classes, probably from the UP Political Science department."

The students, who actually came from different universities, did not cut classes. But, so what if they did? The learning process does not stop once they step out of their classrooms. It can also be enriched in the streets. And whatever their field of study, those students are aware of the rottenness of the present regime; and they have been itching to see Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster from Malacañang.

No money is needed to mobilize those students or the people. They would gain far more once she's out of the picture. (Trust a member of the bourgeois class to value money over principles.) For GMA and her cohorts, there is nowhere to go but down.

GMA should just step down. Nobody believes her anymore, especially with the rising incidence of human rights violations and the unabated killings of militant activists and journalists during her regime.

General asked: Where's the mass base? How can a rotten government, even with its few remaining military faithful, stop the growing mass unrest? It has been said that they can kill the revolutionary, but they can never kill the revolution.

And now comes the hogwash about the "new purge" within the Communist Party of the Philippines to explain the killing of militants. Doesn't this sound like a desperate attempt to cover up the President's campaign to rid this country of "terrorists" (read: "those who want to topple her government"), meaning militant-progressive mass organizations and party-list groups?

—ELAINE MONTESA,
Science for Progress
and Advancement of Country
and Environment,
UP Diliman, Quezon City

No illegal logging and floods in Camiguin

IN THE APRIL 23 TALK OF THE TOWN, THE article titled "Treasures of Camiguin" made us proud of our island. (Indeed, our island is still a paradise.)

But I was alarmed to read about the "widespread illegal logging" in our place. Another point that bothered me was the negative allusion that "nobody wants to go to a place where there are floods and droughts all the time, where there's just denuded mountains." For all we know, the article might have rubbed some sheen off the reputation that Camiguin Island has gained over the years.

I asked our Penro (provincial environment and natural resources officer) if the report was true. And I myself conducted an investigation. There is no illegal logging in Camiguin. Our province is still very rich in natural resources, and because it is small, it is easy for us to arrest those who violate the law.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Camiguin has issued a certification that there is no illegal logging in Camiguin.

We love our province and we are doing our best to conserve and preserve its natural resources for future generations.

Anyone may come to Camiguin and see for himself or herself if, indeed, "there are floods and droughts all the time" or "illegal logging is widespread" in Camiguin.

—PEDRO P. ROMUALDO,
governor, Camiguin

What Prof. Lawrence Heaney said about illegal logging did not refer to the current situation on the island. The logging referred to in the story, as mentioned in the Fieldiana study, occurred in the 1980s and 1990s.

—KATE PEDROSO,
PDI Research

MRT is a great help

I UNDERSTAND THAT A RIDE ON THE METRO Rail Transit (MRT) train is getting to be stressful. (PDI, 5/9/06) But I'm writing to thank MRT Corp. and to suggest how it can make my ride less stressful.

To criticize is easy, but to give a compliment is hard. I commend the MRT for keeping its trains rolling. It had to borrow $465 million in 1997 at the exchange rate of P26.50 to $1. This loan must have ballooned since the peso has weakened against the dollar by around 100 percent. A firm made of lesser stuff would have crumbled. The MRT withstood this drawback. It still runs 17 hours a day. It hauled around 350,000 passengers a day in 2005.

But then there is no such thing as a free lunch. I am, therefore, willing to share the cost of maintaining the MRT's services. If the air-conditioning eventually conks out, then I'll just console myself with the thought that it is hotter in hell.

The writer's gripes must be the result of the fare cut in 2001. I find the present P9.50-P15 MRT fare cheap and the benefit I get from it is of much higher value. I suggest that MRT Corp. be given the freedom to set its fares based on a just market price. This freedom, however, should be used responsibly. The fare hike must be adequate to meet the MRT's reason for being.

—JOSE LEO LEMUEL
G. CAPARAS JR.,
Binggoydgoodboy@yahoo.com

Suspect not with RISOO

THIS HAS REFERENCE TO THE NEWS report of Luigi del Puerto titled "5 cops face robbery raps." (PDI, 5/17/06)

We would like to clarify that PO1 Rhunjalie Salazar, one of the suspects named in the report, is no longer connected with the Regional Intelligence Special Operations Office (RISOO); he was reassigned to the Western Police District on July 29, 2002.

The RISOO, as a special operating and investigative unit of the NCRPO, makes sure that its members are of good moral character and have a record of good performance in the police service.

Rest assured that the NCRPO, under the leadership of Police Director Vidal Querol, will always respect the freedom of the press and promote stronger partnership between the media and the police.

—AGRIMERO A. CRUZ JR., CSEE,
police senior superintendent and chief,
Regional Police Community
Relations Division/
Public Information Division,
Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, Taguig City

Real Life Education through the Enrollment-to-Employment System

Beyond the walls of colleges and universities is a highly competitive world. Students need to be prepared for this through education. But education should never be confined to learning the solutions to mind-boggling equations or knowing which best skill to apply.

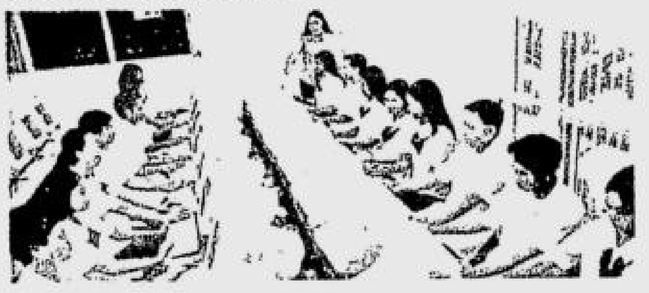
STI
E2E
E2E System

More than acting as a training ground for students, an educational institution should serve as a microcosm of the real world. This is because as students finish their degrees, they are up for tougher competition among other job hunters.

Opportunities for work come to those who are prepared for it. Employers find it difficult to look for competent graduates in the same manner that graduates find job opportunities extremely scarce.

A school should continue to reinvent itself to better prepare its students for the demands of the real world. Like STI, it introduced a new approach to human resource development which emphasizes the need to develop students in various aspects to give them a competitive edge when they graduate.

STI has developed a unique system called the Enrollment–to-Employment System (E2E System) which is a complete approach to human resource development. This system provides real life education and employment support to students when they graduate.



According to STI, its E2E system is comprised of four parts namely: Learning Systems Development, Academic Delivery System, Student Certification Program, and Job Placement Assistance Program. The four components put together attend to the student's needs from the time he enrolls at STI up to the time he applies for a job.

For instance, through the Learning Systems Development, students learn skills that companies are looking for. This is vital because companies are now more demanding of the quality of services and products they get.

Learning Systems Development goes hand in hand with STI's Academic Delivery System which makes sure that all students from STI's network of more than 100 schools get the same quality education from its pool of highly qualified faculty members.

Moving further, STI also assists students in going through assessment and Certification Programs through its partnership with Universal Worker, Inc., a training and review company that provides healthcare workers and other professionals with advanced skills to make them more competitive in the global market.

To complete its system is a component that gives employment support to students who have graduated or are about to graduate. Through STI's partnership with placement agency Global Resource for Outsourced Workers, Inc. or GROW, graduates are presented with various job opportunities.

Graduates are also linked to employers through regular job fairs and STI's online job matching system called I-CARES or the Interactive Career Assistance and Recruitment System. With I-CARES, STI graduates are linked to employers with just a click of a mouse.

There is no better reward for a student than to have a job after college. And there is no better reward for a school than to produce quality graduates that will soon contribute to the development of the nation.

For a school like STI, this is a mission it has accomplished and will continue to pursue.

The Value of Perseverance

Ethel Babia would always describe her life as challenging rather than difficult.

She braved many hardships in the past from selling vegetables at a very young age in Tanay, Rizal to besting numerous job hopefuls.

Every step of the way, Ethel managed to excel. She consistently topped in academics while displaying unmatched leadership skills.

And as she displayed a strong and persevering character and proved to many her intelligence, Ethel met several people who helped her realize her dreams.

It was Dolly Cruz of STI College-EDSA-Crossing who helped Ethel take up BS Computer Science while working as a student assistant. She finished her degree with honors.

All these, she attributes to her continuous strive for excellence.

Now Ethel strives to do well as a professional working at Globe Telecoms, Inc. as a Corporate Technical Specialist.

Ethel Babia
Cum Laude, BS Computer Science
STI, Batch 2003

The Quest For Excellence

Ishaaq Usman Cali couldn't wait to conquer the world. He was born three weeks premature and later grabbed every medal and citation he could get.

His love for excellence was evident even as a child. He joined and won many competitions and was a consistent number one student all through his school life.

Ishaaq also showed he could lead, bagging citations such as the Leadership Award and the most coveted Student of the Year Award at his alma mater, STI College-Quezon Avenue.

Ishaaq graduated Cum Laude with a degree in Computer Science.

Now he couldn't wait to prove that he has nothing but the best to offer as a Junior Software Engineer at Accenture.

Ishaaq Usman Cali
Cum Laude, BS Computer Science
STI, Batch 2006

STI College

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Across the NATION

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'This is not the way of democracy'

By Marlon Ramos
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

CALAMBA CITY—THE FAMILY of slain Bayan Muna leader Noel "Noli" Capulong yesterday challenged President Macapagal-Arroyo to show her authority and control as commander-in-chief of the police and the military by bringing to justice the killers of their loved one.

Lawyer Emilio Capulong, older brother of the victim, said the President should once and for all prove that she has control over the armed units of the government by putting a stop to the killings of activists who, he said, wanted nothing but to help the poor Filipinos.

"This is very tragic. I grieve not only for my brother but also for the tragic situation in the country," Emilio told the INQUIRER at the wake of his brother in Elepaño Subdivision in Barangay Poblacion Tres here.

"This is not the way of democracy. What is happening is contrary to the democratic way of life," he lamented.

Capulong, 51, was gunned down while he was maneuvering his vehicle on a vacant lot near a hospital in Barangay Parian at about 6:20 p.m., said Calamba police chief Supt. Roland Bustos.

He was the 135th activist killed in the region since Ms Arroyo rose into power in 2001, said the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Southern Tagalog (Bayan-ST) in a statement.

He was also the fourth high-ranking leader of Bayan murdered in the last three years.

A bystander who saw the killing told police that the unidentified gunman wearing a bonnet alighted from a motorcycle and approached the victim while firing at him.

The killer then boarded the motorcycle and sped toward the city proper.

Capulong succumbed to four bullet wounds in the jaw, left side of the body, and chest.

Bustos said investigators were hopeful that they could produce an artist's sketch of the killer as the bonnet did not cover his face.

"Based on our initial investigation, the killing was planned. So we have to go deeper into our investigation," Bustos said.

Military's role

Emilio said the government could not hide the fact that the prevalent perception of the public is that military personnel were behind the killings of political dissidents, like those belonging to Bayan and its allied organizations.

"Whether [the accusation that the military is behind the killings is] true or not, she has got to act and act decisively. She cannot just issue a denial. She is the commander-in-chief. That entails a lot of responsibility so that our safety as citizens can be maintained and protected," he lamented.

He added that although the government's insinuations that members of the Left themselves could be behind the killings might be possible, it was still the responsibility of the government to find out the truth about such allegations.

"The speculations should not end there. It's the government's role to go into it and find out the truth of what had happened. If it cannot do it, this government is inutile," he said.

Doyette, the widow of Capulong, said she could not think of anybody who would want her husband dead.

"He was very kind and helpful to others. He never had any enemies and was soft-spoken," the grieving widow said, adding: "I want justice for my husband. I want to know who his killers are and why they did this to him. *Anong kasalanan ng asawa ko?*"

Doyette said her husband had filed a leave from Bayan to focus on organizing the "Botika ng Bayan" project of Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo in the coastal community of Barangay Linga. The project was supposed to be inaugurated on May 31.

Surveillance

Armand Albarillo, secretary general of Bayan-ST, said Capulong had just attended a meeting of residents who were being evicted from a contested property in Belarmino Subdivision when he was killed.

He said the residents had sought their help in seeking a settlement with the owner of the property.

"Noli just wanted to know the situation of the residents there who are in danger in losing their homes. He was trying to find out how he could be of help to them," Albarillo said.

Emilio said that two weeks before the killing, his brother had told him that he noticed unidentified men tailing him.

The Calabarzon police director on Sunday created a special task group to look into Capulong's killing.

Chief Supt. Prospero Noble offered P50,000 to anyone who could provide information that would lead to the identity and arrest of the suspects.

He appointed Bustos to head Task Force Capulong.

"We assure the family of Capulong that the PNP and the military will exert all efforts to solve this killing," Noble told the INQUIRER.

Lt. Gen. Pedro Cabuay Jr., chief of the military's Southern Luzon Command, condemned the killing and offered the assistance of the military in the investigation.

Capulong was the brother of retired Army Gen. Homer Capulong.

"We've offered our assistance before. I'm just reiterating it, especially now that the victim was a brother of a military officer," Cabuay explained.

He said he had ordered Brig.Gen. Roland Detabali, chief of the Army's 202nd Infantry Brigade, to coordinate with Noble in the investigation of all leftist killings.

With a report from Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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34 colleges to hike tuition in Caraga /A21

5 dolphins beached in Dagupan village

DAGUPAN CITY—Five dolphins, one of them with bullet wounds, were found beached in the coastal village of Sabangan here on Saturday.

Westly Rosario, chief of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources research center here, said local residents found the bottlenosed dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) swimming in the waters at about 10 a.m. and reported the presence of the sea mammals to the city agriculture office.

Rosario said four dolphins returned to deeper waters while residents placed the wounded dolphin in a fish cage in the area. BFAR personnel treated the dolphin before it was released to the sea.

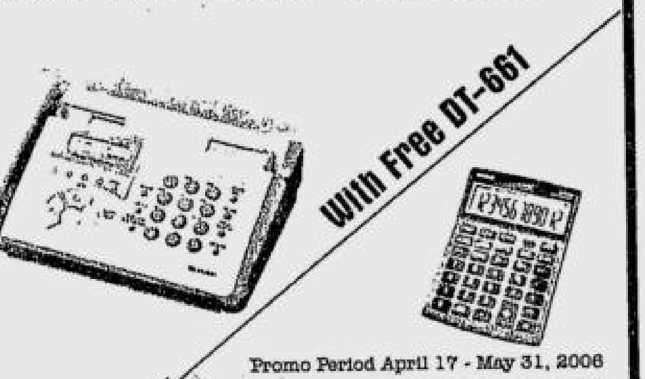
But at about 5 p.m. that day, Rosario said members of the local maritime police brought a wounded dolphin to the BFAR research center for treatment.

"We were not sure if it was the same dolphin which we treated and brought back to the sea earlier that day," Rosario said.

He said the dolphin was already dehydrated when it reached the center. The dolphin died about an hour later.

In November 1997, 11 dolphins were found in the same village but only three of them were saved from slaughter by some residents.

Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau



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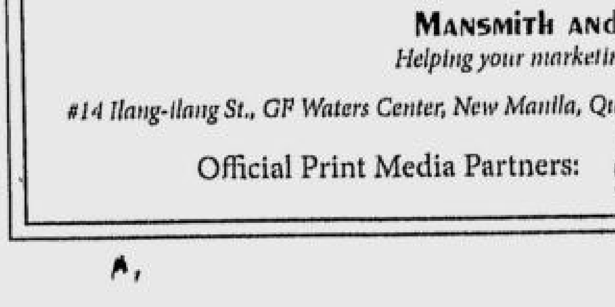

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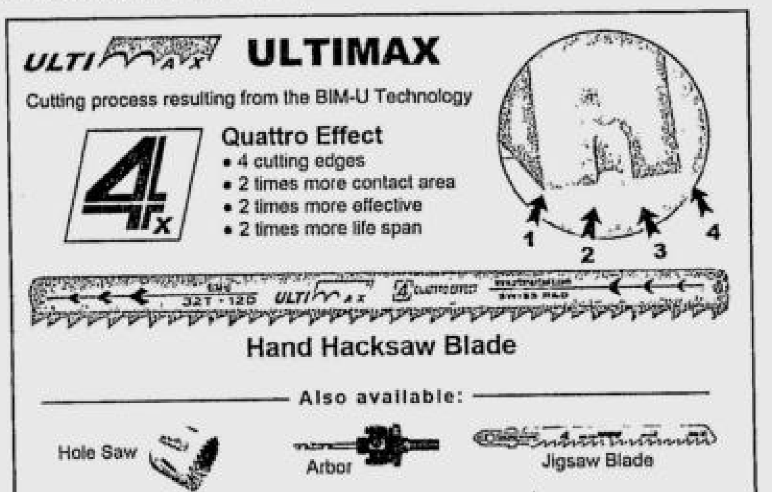

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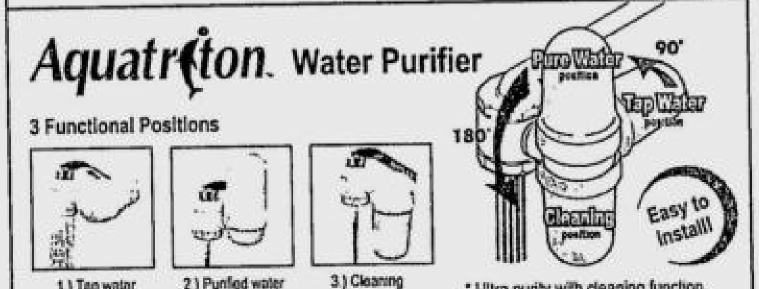

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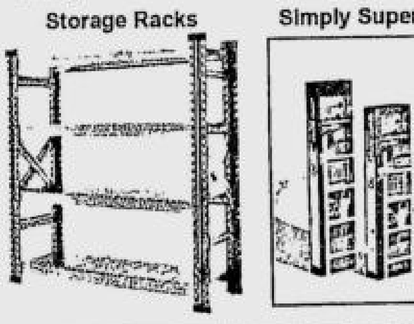

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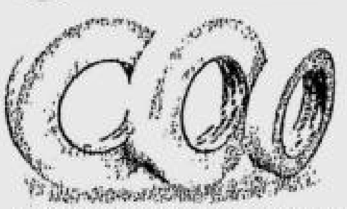

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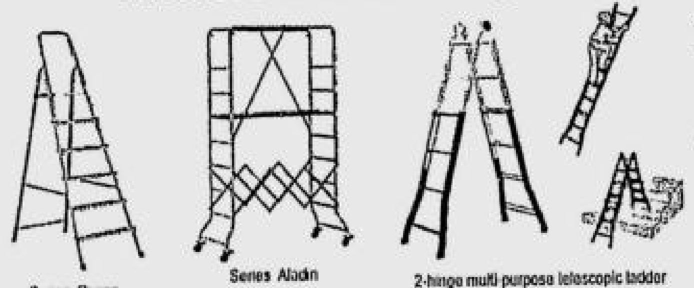

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Iranian gov't to fund 5 hospitals in ARMM

By Charlie Señase
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—THE IRANIAN government has approved "in principle" to fund a proposed project that involves the construction of five 50-bed hospitals in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Samson Gogo, ARMM information chief, said the project envisioned to put up one hospital for each of the five provinces in the region—Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan—at a cost of over $5 million.

Ambassador Jalal Kalantari of the Islamic Republic of Iran assured the ARMM government during his meeting with Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan in Makati City on Saturday that Iranian aid was forthcoming.

Gogo said the governor was optimistic that by 2007, five new hospitals would augment the medical services of 24 government-run hospitals.

Efforts to tap foreign donor countries to help the impoverished ARMM have always been the practice of local leaders due to the national government's perennial budgetary problem.

Government hospitals

"Of the 24 government hospitals in operation, only three could qualify as secondary hospitals, while the rest are mostly primary with both categories having a total bed capacity of 645," said ARMM Health Secretary Lampa Pandi.

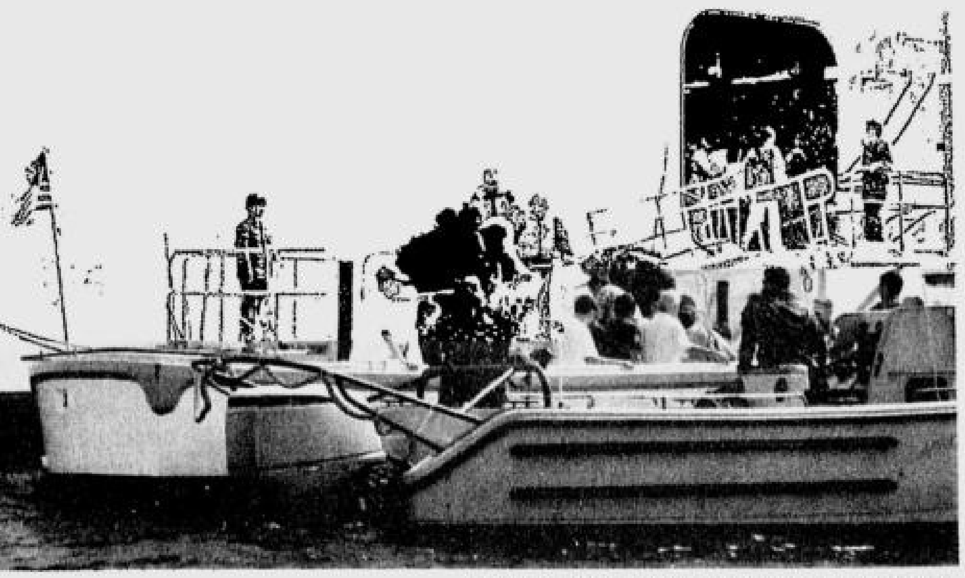
Kalantari has expressed Iran's concern over struggling Muslim states and communities in the world, saying it has been the policy of his government to extend assistance to brothers in need like those in the ARMM.

Ampatuan expressed gratitude to Iran and other "outside assistance" gird toward developing the autonomous region.

He cited the arrival next month of the US floating hospital, a huge Navy ship that would offer various health services.

Ampatuan said local leaders of Basilan, Tawi-Tawi and Sulu were asked to coordinate with health officials in their areas to facilitate ailing constituents so that they could avail themselves of free surgical, medical and dental services that the American specialists would provide.

Pandi said the naval hospital, manned by nearly 700 personnel, would also perform immunization, deworming, veterinary services and program awareness on the possible entry of the avian influenza.



PATIENTS needing surgery board the USNS Mercy as Philippine Navy personnel from the Naval Special Operations Group provide tight security. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sipalay police force sacked for negligence

By Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—THE ENTIRE POLICE FORCE in Sipalay City in Negros Occidental has been relieved after three inmates and two minor offenders bolted out of detention yesterday and brought with them two high-powered firearms.

The three inmates escaped from the police station in Sipalay, 178 km south of here, at about 1:15 a.m., with the help of the two minors who were under the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Police investigation showed the two minors sawed off the padlock of the detention cell of the inmates.

The DSWD office is beside the police station on the ground floor of a building next to City Hall.

The minors, aged 16 and 17, went with the three inmates, identified as Stanely Laurente, 18; Mandy Marfil 19; and Rey Alquizar, 26. They brought with them two M-16 rifles with three magazines containing ammunitions.

Laurente is facing murder charges while Marfil and Alquizar are both charged with frustrated murder. One of the minors was facing charges of cattle rustling while the other was charged with theft.

Shortly after the escape, Negros Occidental police director Senior Supt. Charles Calima ordered the relief of Sipalay police chief Senior Insp. Bonifer Gotas and his 23 policemen.

They were ordered to undergo retraining in Hinigaran town pending investigation of the escape of the detainees.

Calima designated Chief Insp. Jomil John Trio, provincial police intelligence chief, as acting head of the Sipalay police station.

The 23 policemen, on the other hand, were replaced by 30 policemen who had been undergoing Scout Ranger Orientation Course.

Calima said the relief of the Sipalay police force should send a strong message to all chiefs of police not to be lax in securing detainees in their jails.

Army soldiers in southern Negros had joined in the hunt for the escapees.

6 inmates escape from Cebu city jail

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—SIX INMATES ESCAPED shortly before 4 a.m. on Friday at the city jail.

The escapees were Randy Rayala, 23, of Barangay Banilad; Randy Java, 23, of Barangay Pasil; Edgardo Batanes, 26, of Barangay Ermita; Emeric Abadiano, 25, and Garsol Gabuya, 22, both of Barangay Bulacao; and Cesar Saban, 20, of Barangay Pardo, all in this city.

Supt. Efren Nemeño, Bagong Buhay Rehabilitation Center (BBRC) jail warden, said his men recaptured Java while boarding a jeep near JY Square Mall in Barangay Lahug, barely a kilometer from the facility.

"Our jail guards with the support of the policemen are conducting hot pursuit operations against the remaining five escapees," Nemeño said.

The escapees sneaked out of the old and dilapidated jail after punching a hole in the left side of the perimeter fence near the basketball area in front of Camp Lapu-Lapu, headquarters of the Armed Forces of the Philippines' Central Command, Nemeño said.

The inmates pounded the fence with stones and a steel tube to make the hole.

The jailbreak was discovered by the guard-supervisor, JO2 Leo Labata, at 4 a.m.

Nemeño immediately relieved the two jail guards on duty—JO1 Victoriano Vence and JO1 Freddie Perez—who were assigned at Towers 2 and 3. They were the nearest to the hole created by the six prisoners.

Of the five remaining escapees, only Rayala has been convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

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Lafayette asks Sorsogon court to dismiss case

SORSOGON CITY—THE AUSTRALIAN firm Lafayette Mining Co. has asked the regional trial court here to dismiss a civil case filed against it by more than 2,000 fishermen, citing technical defects in the complaint.

Lawyer Cleofe Verzola, the firm's counsel, filed the motion to dismiss Civil Case No. 2006-7639, saying it lacked a certification of non-forum shopping from the complainants as required under the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure.

The case was filed early this year by lawyer Gil Gojol, representing the fishermen from the municipalities hard hit by the fish scare that gripped the province after the mine spills at the Lafayette mine site on Rapu-Rapu Island in Albay.

The complainants have blamed the mining firm for the loss of income they suffered after consumers stopped buying fish, particularly those coming from the towns of Prieto-Diaz, Gubat, Barcelona and Bulusan, and Bacon district in Sorsogon City, for fear that they were contaminated.

The fishermen were seeking P100 each per day reckoned from October 2005 for lost income, P100,000 per individual for moral damages, P100 million for exemplary damages, P1 million as technical assistance fund, and 25 per cent of total recovered amount as attorney's fee.

The counsel for the fishermen said the power of attorney granted to him by the complainants covered the issuance of a certificate of nonforum shopping and that its absence in the complaint was a mere "lapse of the pen."

Lafayette argued otherwise, saying the certification must come from the complainants themselves.

Gojol stressed that "the highest interest of substantial justice must not be sacrificed" on a mere technicality.

Judge Honesto Villamor of RTC Branch 52 said he had yet to set the date for the hearing of the civil case.

Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Illegal loggers warned

SAN FRANCISCO, Agusan del Sur—The days are numbered for provincial government workers believed to be in cahoots with illegal loggers. Forester Danilo Sarong, chief of the Provincial Task Force on Natural Resources Protection and Utilization, aired this warning after receiving reports that some government workers were involved in transporting hot logs out of the province. He said his office would enforce the full force of the law following an executive order issued by Gov. Adolph Edward Plaza to address the rampant illegal logging activities in the province. He said the task force had confiscated P1.2 million worth of illegally cut logs from Prosperidad, Bayugan, Esperanza and Sibagat. *Chris Panganiban, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Assassination plot

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—An assassination plot against Mayor George Yabes of Maitum, Sarangani was foiled following the arrest of the suspected gunman on Thursday. Sarangani police chief Senior Supt. Efren Valeriano identified the arrested suspect as Bellno Sumadang, 21, of Kalamansig town in Sultan Kudarat. Valeriano said Sumadang was about to enter the Maitum town gym at past 7 p.m. Thursday when policemen frisked him. Seized from him was a loaded bullet magazine of a .45 cal. pistol and a letter addressed to Yabes. "We were glad that Sumadang was arrested because we were able to preempt their plan against the mayor," Valeriano said. He said that during interrogation, Sumadang identified several people involved in the plot. Valeriano did not name the other suspects. *Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gang member nabbed

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—The Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Laguna police arrested a suspected member of the notorious Valle Verde car theft syndicate in San Pablo City on Saturday morning. Police said Robert John Aglipay, 28, of Jowell Town Subdivision, Barangay San Rafael, San Pablo, was among the few remaining members of the gang, composed mostly of young men belonging to affluent families in Metro Manila. Recovered from the suspect's house were a 9-mm Glock pistol, 16 magazines for an M16 rifle, a blue camouflage uniform similar to those used by policemen, a bonnet and other ammunitions. Also found in Aglipay's lair were two reported stolen vehicles—a white Honda CRV (XSY 607) and a silver Toyota Vios (ZBT 542). The suspect also faces charges of illegal possession of firearms and ammunitions.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Tourism bill questioned

BATANGAS CITY—The provincial board unanimously approved Thursday a resolution to question certain provisions of the Tourism Act of 2005 or Senate Bill 2138. Under Section 35 of the bill sponsored by Senator Richard Gordon, tourism-related enterprises are required to get accreditation from the Department of Tourism in matters of quality of facilities and services offered. Those who fail to meet the standards are subject to cancellation of licenses to operate. The bill also subjects local government executives who fail to act under the provisions to fines and suspension of services from the DOT. The board members said the bill's provisions are contrary to promoting tourism though local autonomy. It would otherwise be more effective and ideal to leave the accreditation of hotels and other related enterprises to private tour operations and organizations to prevent red tape and corruption, they said. *Marlon Alexander Luistro, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Lightning kills 3

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Three fishermen were killed when they were hit by lightning in a small coastal village in Lemery, Batangas on Thursday. Police said Zaldy Sarabia, 46, his brother Elizeo, 35, and neighbor Apollo Gamboa, 33—all residents of Barangay Wawa, Batangas City—died instantly after suffering third degree burns all over their bodies. Versoza said the three, with their fishing gears, were about to leave Barangay Balanga in Lemery on board their small fishing boat when residents heard an ear-splitting sound at about 7:30 p.m. He said when the residents looked at where the sound came from, they saw the victims' charred bodies sprawled on the shore. Versoza noted that although it was raining intermittently that night, the local Coast Guard did not bar small fishing boats from leaving as no thunderstorm was reported in the region.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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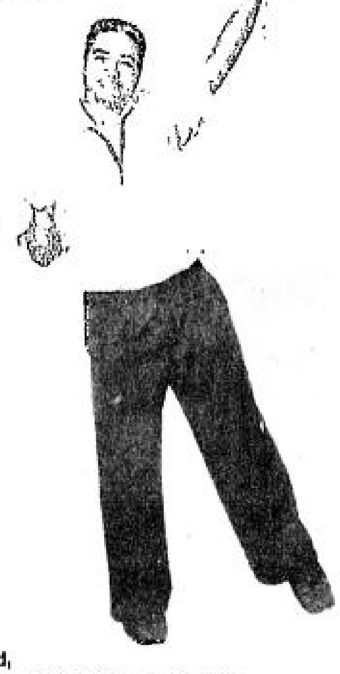

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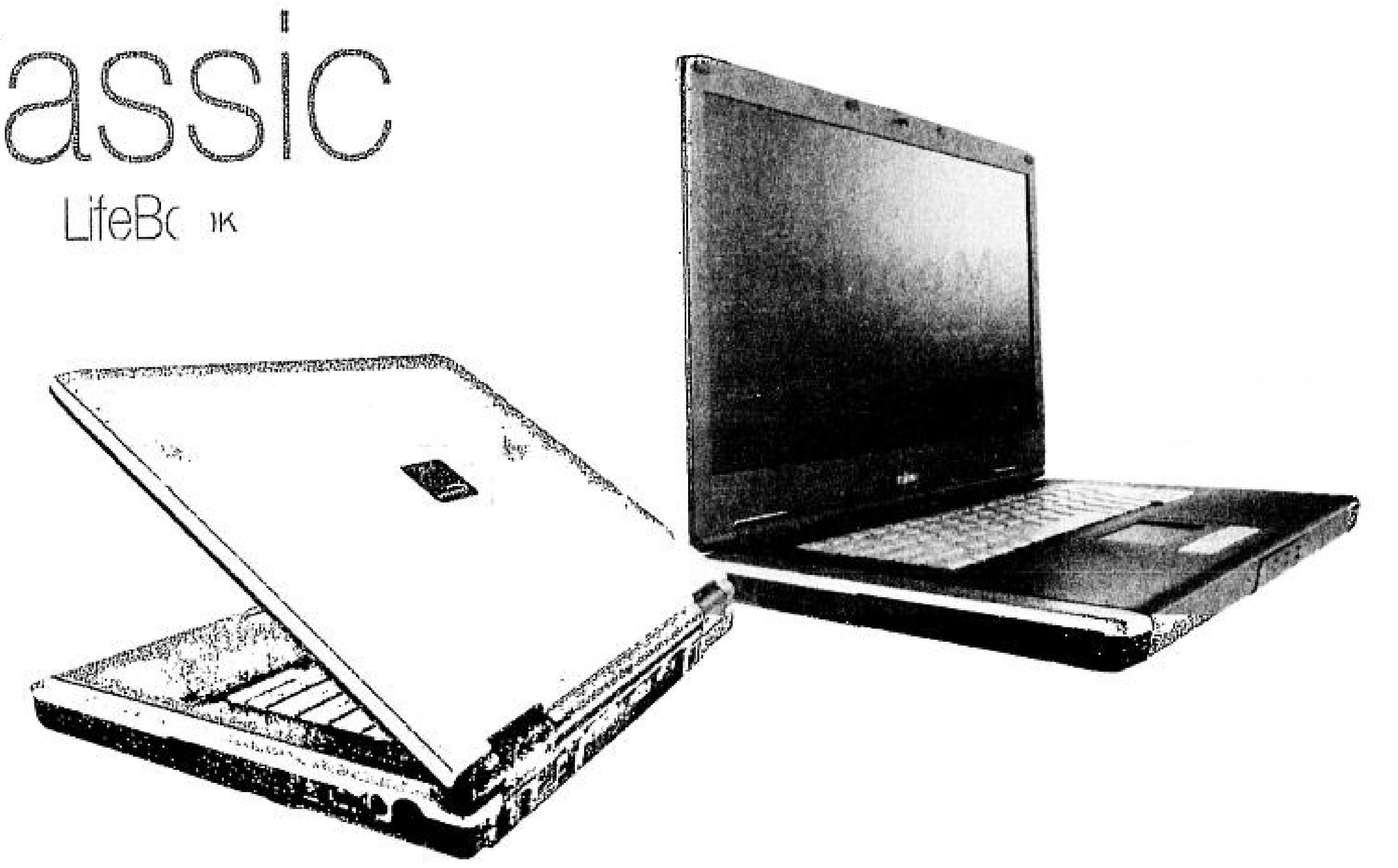

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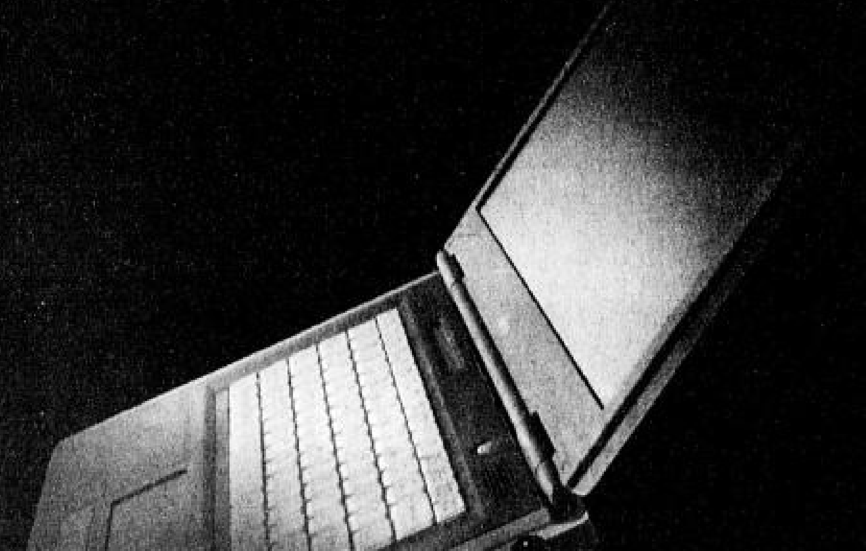

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MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

Firm to rehabilitate Toledo copper mine

By Irene R. Sino-Cruz
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—ATLAS CONSOLIDATED MINING and Development Corp. (ACMDC) will soon implement the $160-million rehabilitation of its copper mine in Toledo City.

ACMDC executive vice president and chief financial officer Martin Buckingham said the project would take 12-15 months from the start of de-watering of the Carmen pit.

Buckingham said the draining of the flooded underground mine would take 4-6 months, with cost projected to reach $3 million.

He said the company was still canvassing prices of the equipment to be used in the dewatering.

The reopening of the copper mine, scheduled in 2007, is expected to pour in economic and social benefits into Toledo.

During a simple ceremony held on Wednesday, ACMDC president and chair Alfredo Ramos turned over to Mayor Arlene Espinosa-Zambo one million shares of stocks worth P8 million (present market value) and a check worth P1 million, representing the balance of the cash component of the company's real estate taxes payable to the city government.

Zambo said the company and the city government earlier reached a compromise agreement, which reduced ACMDC's payables from P280 million to P100 million. Of the P100 million, P10 million is in cash while the balance is in the form of shares of stocks and some of Atlas' properties, Ramos said.

The company will also start paying the retirement benefits of its legitimate employees as soon as Atlas comes up with the mechanics, he added.

ACMDC assistant vice president and resident manager Rodrigo Cal said the company had to pay close to P101 million, the balance of the original P250 million owed to its employees.

Zambo said the company were excited at the reopening of the mine site as it would again revive the city's economy.

The company has entered into an agreement with Crescent Asian Special Opportunities Portfolio (Casop) for a financing package worth $40 million.

Casop will initially infuse $33 million into Carmen Copper Corp., a full Atlas subsidiary, which will rehabilitate the copper mine.

The infusion will be made in two tranches: A $5-million convertible bond upfront and a $28-million subscription for new shares upon the finalization of a senior debt instrument and off-take agreement for the copper project.

Proceeds from the convertible bond will be used to finance the draining of the underground mine.

Ramos said the company was working on possible ways to start copper production earlier, instead of at the end of the mine rehabilitation.

Buckingham said the company wanted to generate earnings while the price of copper in the world market was at an all-time high.

An earlier start in mining operations will help the company raise part of the funds for rehabilitation while the balance will come from outside sources, he said.

Open-pit production at Toledo started in 1955 at 4,000 tons daily and reached 110,000 tons daily by 1977, making it the fifth largest in the world.

After the rehabilitation is completed, Atlas' daily output is estimated at 42,000 tons, according to Cal.

Buckingham said the mine's resources could last up to 40 years or more. "There is potential for a longer operation," he added.

According to the company, the reopening of the copper mine would result in exports of up to $3 billion over 12 years.

In addition, the company, upon full operation, will be employing a total of 3,000 workers.

Tourism body urges Sorsogon natives to revisit province

THE SORSOGON PROVINCIAL TOURISM Council (SPTC) has urged natives of Sorsogon to revisit the province, which, it said, offers a lot of places for vacationers.

On June 28, the council, headed by Loida Nicolas Lewis, will hold its second Mrs. Balik-Sorsogon and Mrs. Balik-Bicol pageant in time for Sorsogon City's Pili Festival on June 1-30.

The pageant is a fund-raising campaign under the Balik Sorsogon/Balik Bicol 2006 program that seeks to establish the Sorsogon Provincial Museum and Heritage Center, according to a news release.

Mrs. Balik Sorsogon candidates are those living abroad while candidates for Mrs. Balik Bicol are those in the Philippines but residing outside the province.

Through the affair, Sorsoganon folk and friends are enjoined to help, share and experience the warmth and hospitality of their province-mates and renew ties with old friends and relatives while enjoying the food, beaches and natural beauty of Sorsogon.

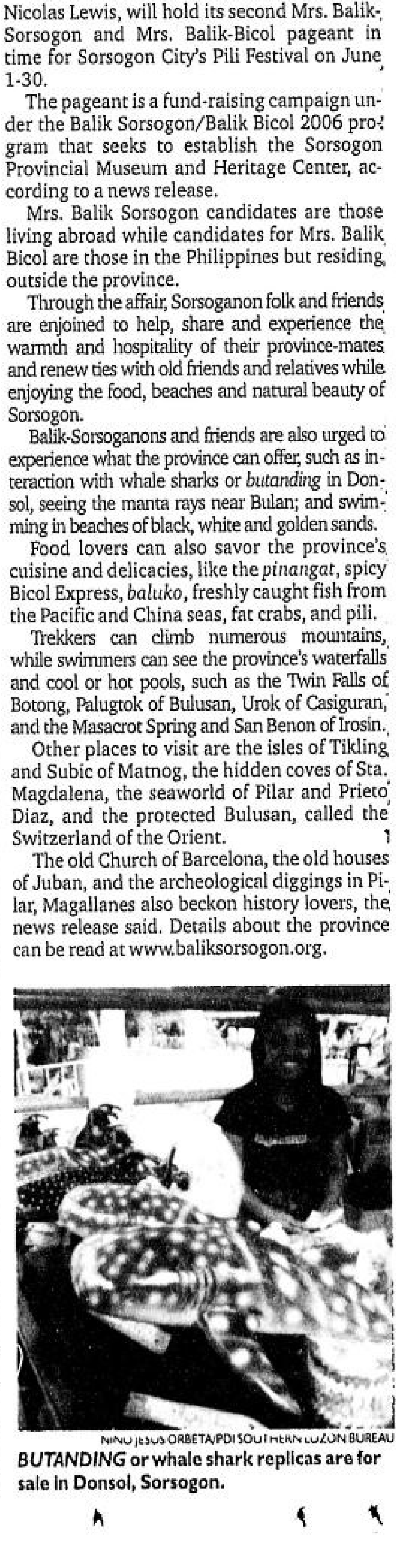
Balik-Sorsoganons and friends are also urged to experience what the province can offer, such as interaction with whale sharks or *butanding* in Donsol, seeing the manta rays near Bulan; and swimming in beaches of black, white and golden sands.

Food lovers can also savor the province's cuisine and delicacies, like the *pinangat*, spicy Bicol Express, *baluko*, freshly caught fish from the Pacific and China seas, fat crabs, and pili.

Trekkers can climb numerous mountains, while swimmers can see the province's waterfalls and cool or hot pools, such as the Twin Falls of Botong, Palugtok of Bulusan, Urok of Casiguran, and the Masacrot Spring and San Benon of Irosin.

Other places to visit are the isles of Tikling and Subic of Matnog, the hidden coves of Sta. Magdalena, the seaworld of Pilar and Prieto Diaz, and the protected Bulusan, called the Switzerland of the Orient.

The old Church of Barcelona, the old houses of Juban, and the archeological diggings in Pilar, Magallanes also beckon history lovers, the news release said. Details about the province can be read at www.baliksorsogon.org.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BUTANDING or whale shark replicas are for sale in Donsol, Sorsogon.

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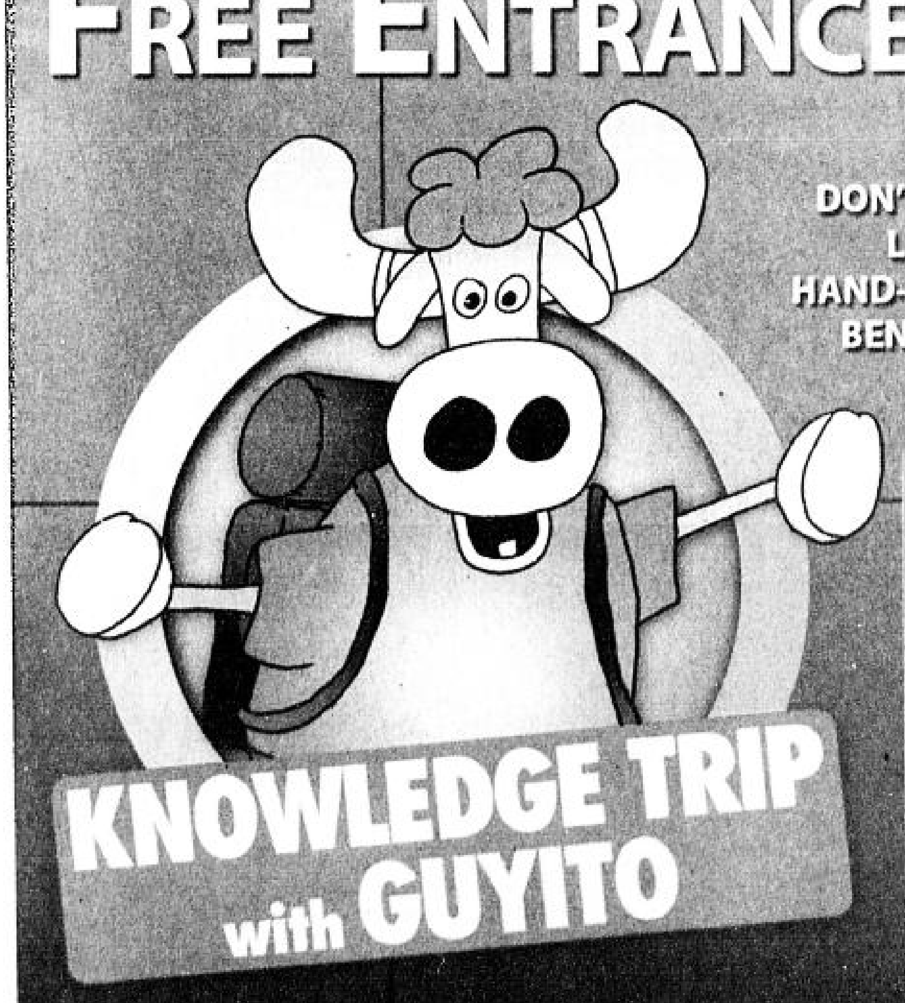

READY FOR CLASS OPENING
Children, accompanied by their parents, shop for school supplies in Davao City in preparation for the start of classes in June.
BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

34 colleges in Caraga to increase tuition

BUTUAN CITY—THIRTY-FOUR COLLEGES in Caraga will raise tuition by at least 7.6 percent this school year, the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) here said.

Dr. Lorenza Gonzales, education supervisor of the CHEd-Caraga, disclosed that of the 53 colleges in the four-province region, 34 had been allowed to raise tuition.

Gonzales said the approved 7.6-percent increase was based on current inflation rate set by the national government.

Among those given the go-signal by the commission are Urios College, Agusan Colleges, Butuan City Colleges, Caraga Institute of Technology and Saint Theresa's College in Tandag, Surigao del Sur.

Gonzales brushed aside criticisms that the approval came "without the benefit of consultation" between leaders of concerned students' government and the school administrations.

"Based on the guidelines imposed by the CHEd national office, only those seeking increases beyond 7.6 percent will have to undergo such consultation," Gonzales said.

She, however, said the agency still had to monitor if the proceeds from the tuition increases went to their intended school programs.

Under the CHEd memorandum, 70 percent of the increase should go to salaries and benefits of faculty members, 20 percent to school development, and 10 percent to the upgrading of textbooks and other information materials.

Schools found violating the policy would face sanctions ranging from revocation of permit, recommendation for downgrading of various school standards accreditations and possible closure, Gonzales said.

"We are now tasked with looking and monitoring how the money collected from such increases will be spent, and we have a task force [to implement] that," Gonzales added.

Franklin Caliguid, PDI Mindanao Bureau

More programs, services for kids urged in Visayas

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—CHILD LABORERS IN THE Visayas are calling on the government to implement more children-oriented programs and services to stem the growing number of children who are forced to work.

In a statement issued at the culmination of the First Visayas-Wide Children's Congress on Tuesday, 142 child laborers urged the government to provide more access to education, alternative livelihood programs for their parents and stricter implementation of laws on children.

These were among the 14 recommendations drafted by the children during the three-day meeting organized by the Pag-Aaral ng mga Bata para sa Kinabukasan (ABK) Initiative.

The ABK Initiative is a four-year project (2003-07) funded by the US Department of Labor and implemented by the National Coalition of Children's Participation.

The children, aged 10-16 years old, joined workshops and cultural programs to share their work experiences in Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Cebu and Iloilo.

"As poverty in our country worsens, the number of child laborers is increasing. Many of us are among those subjected to the worst forms of child labor," the children said in their statement in Filipino.

The children said many of their fellow children were forced to sell their bodies to stave off hunger.

"We have observed that the government cannot fulfill its obligation to care for our rights and welfare as children," they said.

Unenforced laws

Laws that were supposed to protect their rights and punished those who abused them were not being implemented, they said.

The Visayas has among the highest number of child laborers in the country: Around 388,000 in Central Visayas and 349,000 in Eastern Visayas.

The two regions are next only to Southern Tagalog, which has the most number of child laborers at 461,000, according to the 2000 survey of the International Labor Organization and the National Statistics Office.

Western Visayas has around 329,000 child laborers, according to the Department of Labor and Employment.

Among those who are working at a young age is 14-year-old Revanuie Jane Dequito, of Ajuy, Iloilo.

Dequito has been helping her mother sell shrimp paste at the neighboring town of Sara since she was 9 years old.

She spends her Saturdays at their stall in the town market from 5 to 11 a.m. She is given P20, which serves as her school allowance.

"It is hard at times but I have to help my family," Dequito told the INQUIRER.

The worst forms of child labor exists in sugarcane plantations, pyrotechnic production, mining and quarrying, deep-sea fishing, commercial and sexual exploitation and domestic work, according to an ABK Initiative information sheet.

Protection councils

The children recommended the organization and activation of Barangay Councils for the Protection of Children (BCPCs).

The BCPC, headed by the barangay chair, is mandated to plan programs and activities for children. It has counterparts on the municipal, city and provincial levels.

But many of the BCPCs do not function, said Joy Valla of the Department of the Interior and Local Government in Western Visayas.

Valla said that of the 4,049 barangays in Western Visayas, only 336 or 8 percent have functional BCPCs.

"Many officials do not see the importance of the (BCPCs) because they believe that children do not need specific programs because they also benefit from other programs of the barangay," Valla told the INQUIRER.

Bacolod City Councilor Jocelle Batapa-Sigue said many politicians "trivialized" issues dealing with children.

Sigue said a widespread campaign should be launched to disseminate provisions of Republic Act No. 9231 or the "Special Protection of Children against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act."

"This is a relatively new law and the public should know that they could be jailed if they subject children to child labor," said Sigue.

WHY WE WANT A UNICAMERAL PARLIAMENT

So that the Filipino people will not be misled and misinformed, here is what we mean when we say: **ABOLISH THE SENATE and the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

Since July 2004 when the 13th Congress was inaugurated, here is the score from the congressional ledger: **51 bills of national application and 708 bills of local application already approved on third reading by the House of Representatives *have been gathering dust for months in the Senate.***

The list of bills is too long to fit this space. We've collated most of the 51 national bills, majority of which are urgent reform measures, because they may never see the light of day in the Senate.

The Senate's inaction is an absolute waste of people's money. Just one law enacted by the Senate and the House of Representative costs the government almost ₱700 million in taxpayers money.**

The Senate's conduct leads to one inescapable conclusion: It's time to shift the country to a parliamentary government and a unicameral (one-house) parliament!

** Source: *Manila Standard Today*

Bills of National Application Long Approved by the House and Pending in the Senate
As of April 25, 2006

Bill No.	*Short Title*	*Transmitted to the Senate*
HB04710	General Appropriations Act of 2006	3/21/06
HB04839	Anti-Terrorism Act of 2005	1/24/06
HB04629	Bioethanol Fuel Act of 2005	8/24/05
HB03295	The Investments Incentives Code of the Philippines	12/15/04
HB03740	Amending RA No. 8178 by Extending the Utilization Period of Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund	3/8/05
HB04069	Anti-Smuggling Act of 2005	5/24/05
HB02933	Granting a One-Time Tax Amnesty on all Unpaid National Internal Revenue Taxes for Taxable Year 2003 and Prior Years	12/15/04
HB04264	Omnibus Housing and Urban Development Act	10/12/05
HB04275	Ensuring Objectivity and the Protection of Witnesses in the Prosecution of Cases by the Ombudsman, Allowing Private Lawyers to Act as Prosecutors on his behalf	6/1/05
HB03835	Socialized and Low-Cost Housing Loan Restructuring Act of 2005	3/16/05
HB04081	Billion Trees Act of 2005	5/4/05
HB05008	The University of the Philippines Charter of 2005	2/7/06
HB03370	Creating the Office of the Comptroller of the AFP	4/6/06
HB01562	Amending RA 340, as Amended, which Established a Uniform Retirement System for the AFP	4/6/06
HB04846	The Land Administration Reform Act of 2005	11/29/05
HB03309	Frontline Service Information Act of 2004	3/9/05
HB00068	Prohibiting the Detention of Live or Dead Patients in Hospitals and Medical Clinics for Non-payment of Hospital Bills or Medical Expenses	5/25/05
HB04602	Philippine Cooperative Code of 2005	10/12/05
HB04835	Amending RA 53, As amended, by Including Within Its Coverage Journalists from Broadcast, News Agencies and Internet Publications	11/29/05

Senate Bills pending in the House of Representatives:

SB1967	An Act Redefining The Term "Veteran" Thereby Amending Further Republic Act. No. 6948, as Amended
SB2027	An Act Declaring the Month of February of Every Year as Liver and Hepatitis-B Awareness Month

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GMA, world leaders send rescuers, pledge relief aid

THE PHILIPPINES YESTERDAY JOINED countries around the world in scrambling to get food and supplies into Indonesian towns and cities pounded to rubble by an earthquake that left thousands dead or homeless.

President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed sorrow over the deaths and devastation wrought by the Indonesian earthquake and ordered a humanitarian mission to be deployed there.

"On behalf of the Filipino people, I extend our sympathies to the people of Indonesia who have once more suffered great loss and pain in the face of this tragedy. We are deeply saddened," Ms Arroyo said.

She said a humanitarian mission would be organized and deployed to the quake-ravaged regions soon. The Philippines sent a group of doctors and civic workers to Indonesia when it was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami in 2004.

"We are now arranging that (humanitarian mission). It will probably be just medical personnel, no military personnel," said Glenn Rabonza, executive director of the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

Rabonza said the NDCC would coordinate with the Department of Health and the Department of Social Welfare and Development in organizing the humanitarian mission. "They will leave as soon as possible," he said.

Ms Arroyo said the international community should help Indonesia, in the same way foreign governments assisted the Philippines following the deadly landslide in Southern Leyte early this year.

"We have a duty to help our neighbors as well as the whole of humanity in times like these, just as the world came to our succor in the Saint Bernard landslide," she said.

Global community

According to her, the Department of Foreign Affairs is also checking if there were Filipinos among the quake victims so assistance could be extended them.

As photos and footage emerged of stunned, anguished survivors limping through crumbled buildings, the global community immediately offered millions of dollars, tons of supplies and hundreds of trained personnel.

South Korea on Sunday rushed in 19 doctors and rescuers, and $100,000 worth of emergency medical gear, the foreign ministry said.

Over the weekend, Malaysia sent about 300 disaster relief experts, five doctors, several paramedics and a ton of food, blankets and other essentials.

Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer offered A$3 million ($2.27 million) for emergency food, shelter and medical supplies. He said assessment teams would study whether more was needed.

"We are looking at what we can do to help," Downer said on television. "It may be that we'll have to do quite a lot."

Japan was preparing to send relief goods and financial aid. Tokyo had already sent a team of seven doctors and nurses, the foreign ministry said.

Separately, the Japanese Red Cross Society said it had decided to contribute 100 million yen ($896,000) in emergency disaster relief.

China's President Hu Jintao offered $2 million and said Beijing would send rescue personnel and materials as needed, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Singapore said it was sending a 35-member medical team, 43 disaster and rescue workers, and three search dogs. It has also pledged $50,000 worth of emergency supplies.

Thailand's foreign ministry said it planned to send aid and was set to decide on the details on Monday.

Red Cross

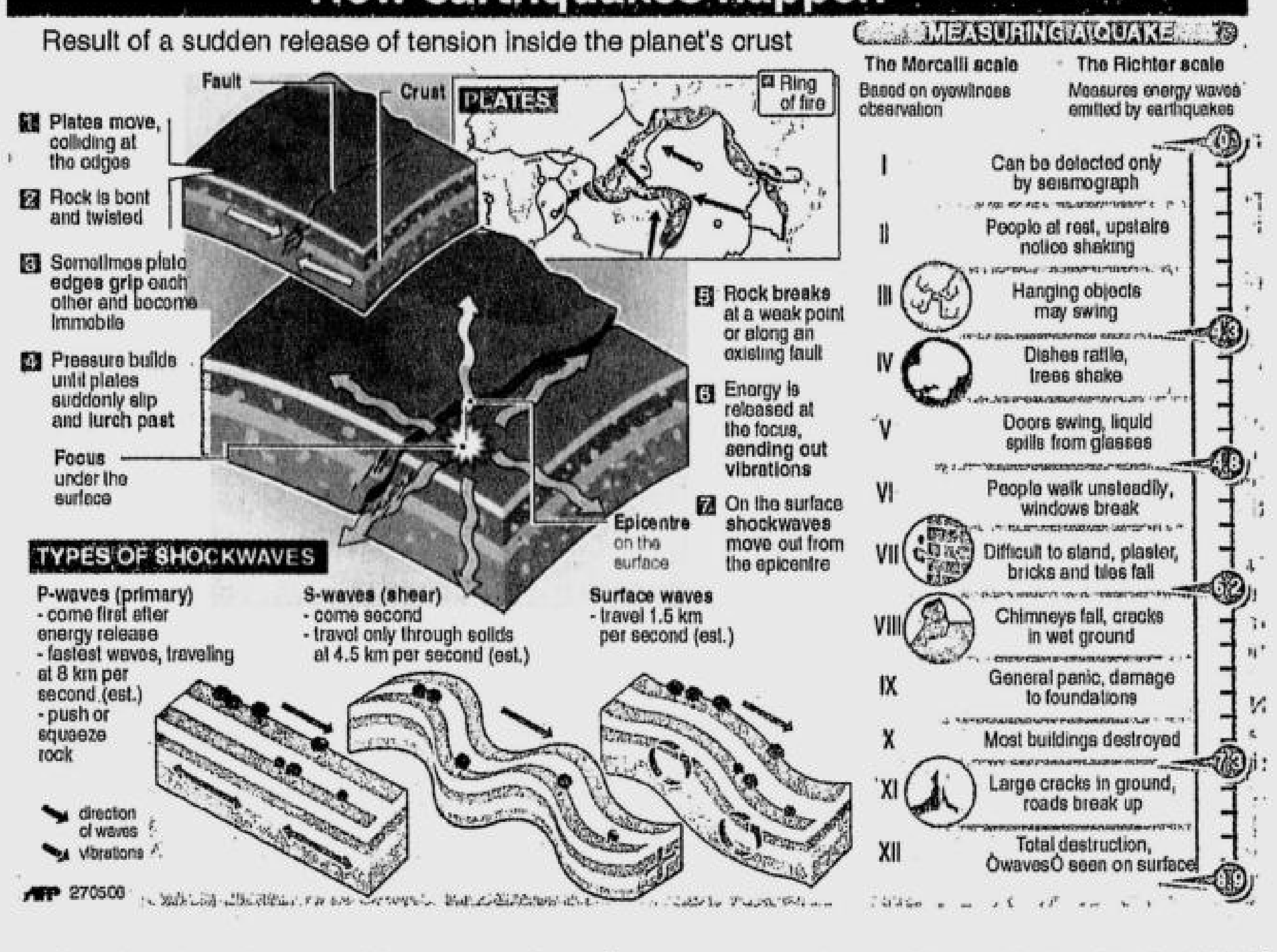
New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark pledged NZ$500,000 ($316,500) and said her country would give more if needed.

The Asian Development Bank assured Indonesia's government "of ADB's fullest support and cooperation in rebuilding lives affected by the devastating earthquake."

Outside Asia, the Red Cross appealed for 12 million Swiss francs ($9.8 million) for survivors.

How earthquakes happen

Result of a sudden release of tension inside the planet's crust


Fault
Crust
PLATES
Ring of fire
1 Plates move, colliding at the edges
2 Rock is bent and twisted
3 Sometimes plate edges grip each other and become immobile
4 Pressure builds until plates suddenly slip and lurch past
Focus under the surface
5 Rock breaks at a weak point or along an existing fault
6 Energy is released at the focus, sending out vibrations
7 On the surface shockwaves move out from the epicentre
Epicentre on the surface
TYPES OF SHOCKWAVES
P-waves (primary) - come first after energy release - fastest waves, traveling at 8 km per second (est.) - push or squeeze rock
S-waves (shear) - come second - travel only through solids at 4.5 km per second (est.)
Surface waves - travel 1.5 km per second (est.)
direction of waves
vibrations
MEASURING A QUAKE
The Mercalli scale
Based on eyewitness observation
The Richter scale
Measures energy waves emitted by earthquakes
I Can be detected only by seismograph
II People at rest, upstairs notice shaking
III Hanging objects may swing
IV Dishes rattle, trees shake
V Doors swing, liquid spills from glasses
VI People walk unsteadily, windows break
VII Difficult to stand, plaster, bricks and tiles fall
VIII Chimneys fall, cracks in wet ground
IX General panic, damage to foundations
X Most buildings destroyed
XI Large cracks in ground, roads break up
XII Total destruction, ÒwavesÓ seen on surface

AFP 270506

The Indonesian Red Cross, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, immediately mobilized more than 400 volunteers and staff, the Geneva-based federation said in a statement.

It said its experts in the quake zone said about 200,000 people have been left homeless.

In Java's Bantul city, "70 to 80 percent of homes and buildings were damaged or destroyed, while electricity and water services have also been affected throughout the region," said Arnulv Torbjornsen, head of the federation's delegation in Jakarta.

"Aftershocks are continuing to shake the city, and many people remain trapped under buildings and rubble."

The Rome-based UN World Food Program said that a UN plane with medicine and medical personnel was set to arrive on Sunday, and that eight truckloads of food were on their way with fortified noodles and biscuits.

The UN children's agency Unicef said it was ready to send in tents, hygiene kits, health kits and school supplies.

> 'We have a duty to help our neighbors as well as the whole of humanity in times like these'

"So often in natural disasters children and the elderly suffer disproportionately because they are least able to react quickly," said Unicef Executive Director Ann Veneman.

The European Union has granted up to euro3 million ($3.8 million) in emergency aid.

Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D'Alema ordered a planeload of 27 tons of tents, blankets, cooking kits, plastic sheeting, generators, pumps and water purification equipment.

Switzerland said it would send two experts and donate $100,000 to the Indonesian Red Cross.

The Italian Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church, saying it was heeding the Pope's appeal to help Java, said it was allocating euro2 million (more than $2.5 million).

Leaders in Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Pakistan and Spain also offered to help. *Reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Dona Pazzibugan and AP*

Her last words were 'Daddy, Daddy'

From page A1

Tens of thousands of people spent Saturday night sleeping in any open space available—on streets, in cassava fields, even on the narrow paths between rice fields. Power and telephone service was out across much of the region, adding to the terror of aftershocks.

About 450 aftershocks had shaken the region as of Sunday noon, with the strongest measuring magnitude 5.2, said Handi, an official at the Meteorology and Geophysics Agency. Many Indonesians use only one name.

Survivors searched the ruins of their homes on Sunday for anything still usable and complained that they hadn't received any aid. International agencies and other nations pledged millions of dollars of aid. *(See story on this page)*

"We're short of everything—clothes, food, water, all are gone. We are poor people, but our lives still matter," said Budi Wiyana, 63, whose house was destroyed.

Doctors struggled to care for the injured, hundreds of whom were lying on plastic sheets, straw mats and even newspapers outside overcrowded hospitals, some hooked to intravenous drips dangling from trees.

Bloodstains littered the floor at Yogyakarta's Dr. Sardjito Hospital, along with piles of soiled bandages and used medical supplies.

Relatives fanned victims in the heat in temporary shelters set up in the parking lot and corridors.

'Too many patients'

"We have too many patients and they're still arriving," said Aru, a doctor, adding that the hospital had received more than 2,000 patients.

Though some corpses were pulled from the rubble early Sunday, residents in villages visited by reporters said there were few people or bodies trapped beneath collapsed houses, mostly simple brick and wood structures.

But in Peni, a small village on Bantul's southern outskirts, 20 residents were not ready to give up. They found the bodies of a woman and her three children on Saturday. The residents were still trying to find the family's father, Purwoko.

Most of the dead were buried in village graveyards within hours of the disaster, in line with Islamic tradition.

In Peni, villagers set up simple clinics to treat injuries, but they were hampered by shortages of medicine and equipment. A group of women cooked catfish caught in a nearby pond for dozens of people huddled under a large tent.

The earthquake hit at 5:54 a.m., caving in tile roofs and sending walls crashing down. Survivors screamed as they ran from their homes, some clutching bloodied children and the elderly.

Series of disasters

The temblor was the latest in a series of disasters to hit Indonesia—including the 2004 tsunami that ravaged Aceh province, terrorist attacks, a widening bird flu outbreak and the threat of eruption from nearby Mount Merapi.

The quake's epicenter was 80 km south of the Merapi volcano, and activity increased soon after the temblor. A large burst spewed hot clouds and sent debris cascading some 3.5 km down its western flank. No one was injured because nearby residents had already been evacuated.

Bambang Dwiyanto of the energy and mineral ministry could not say whether the quake caused the volcanic activity but he warned that it could trigger a larger eruption.

Indonesia, the world's largest archipelago, is prone to seismic upheaval due to its location on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanos and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. It has the largest number of volcanos in the world—76.

Bantul is about 2,230 km southeast of Aceh province, where 131,000 people died in a December 2004 tsunami that was triggered by a magnitude-9.1 earthquake under the sea.

At least 4,332 people were killed in the quake, according to an official in the affected areas. The social ministry said around 4,600 died, but numbers in one of the hardest hit districts were disputed.

Another 200,000 people were left homeless, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Temple damaged

Officials said the famed 7th century Borobudur Buddhist temple, one of Indonesia's most popular tourist attractions, was not affected by the quake. But Prambanan, a spectacular Hindu temple to the southeast, suffered serious damage, with hundreds of stone carvings and blocks scattered around the ancient site.

The Hindu temple will be closed to the public until archeologists are able to determine whether the foundation was damaged, said Agus Waluyo, head of the Yogyakarta Archaeological Conservation Agency.

Close to a million tourists visit the Borobudur and Prambanan temples every year. *AP*

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Temblors jolt Papua, Babuyan, Tonga isles

From page A1

people on the central Indonesian island of Java on Saturday.

"Sometimes, where there is a big earthquake in one area ... it might upset the tectonic activity in other areas, but not necessarily," Sardina said.

"For that, we'd have to analyze a whole lot of archive data to see a certain pattern in terms of seismic activity," he added. "I don't think they're related."

Calls to Papua New Guinea's National Disaster Center went unanswered on Sunday, and details on injuries or damage were not immediately available.

Police in Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa, and in the Ha'apai Islands group capital of Pangai to the north, reported no serious injuries or damage.

"Yes, we felt it," said Constable Mosese Latu in Pangai, which was near the epicenter.

"There are no damage reports and no injuries—everything's fine," Latu told The Associated Press in a telephone interview.

In Nuku'alofa, publisher Mary Fonua said the quake was short but sharp.

"We definitely felt it and we went running outside the moment it struck because it was a significant jolt," Fonua said.

Ring of Fire

Papua New Guinea, Tonga and Indonesia are part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" where earthquakes and volcanic activity are frequent.

Experts believe the activity in the earth's crust over the past two days—including the awakening of the Mount Merapi volcano near the epicenter of Saturday's quake—was linked to the Ring of Fire.

"There's no doubt they are effects of the same cause—the ring of weakness in the earth's surface," said Gary Gibson, professor of seismology at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia.

The Ring of Fire, which stretches along the western coast of the Americas through the island nations of the South Pacific and on through Southeast Asia, is a series of fault lines—or weaknesses—in the hardened upper layers of the earth's surface, known as the crust.

These lines of weakness are the meeting points of huge continental plates that make up the crust and which literally float on the molten rock of the earth's core.

These plates are in constant motion, clashing with each other or moving away from each other, creating stresses and pressure buildups at their margins.

This stress is released through volcanic eruptions, when the molten rock is ejected as magma through fissures in the crust, or via earthquakes, when the pressure causes the crust to buckle and shift.

Most of these seismic events are small and occur under the sea, where the majority of the continental plate margins are found.

But occasionally they generate volcanic explosions, earthquakes or landslides.

According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), an average of 19.4 quakes of 7.0-plus strength occur on the Ring of Fire each year. Indonesia has suffered from three catastrophic earthquakes in the past 18 months.

On Dec. 26, 2004, the 9.3-magnitude quake unleashed tsunamis that crashed into Indian Ocean shorelines and killed 168,000 people in Indonesia's Aceh province alone.

Six hundred people were killed in an 8.7-quake just 160 km to the south on March 28, 2005.

Comparatively small

Gibson said that the flurry of seismic activity of the past days was comparatively small.

"On any given day you would find seismic activity greater than this throughout the Pacific region," he said.

"Last week, there was a sequence of earthquakes between New Zealand and Tonga that were far greater—we got up to magnitude of 7.8 on one day," he said. "But nobody knows anything about it because it didn't affect anybody."

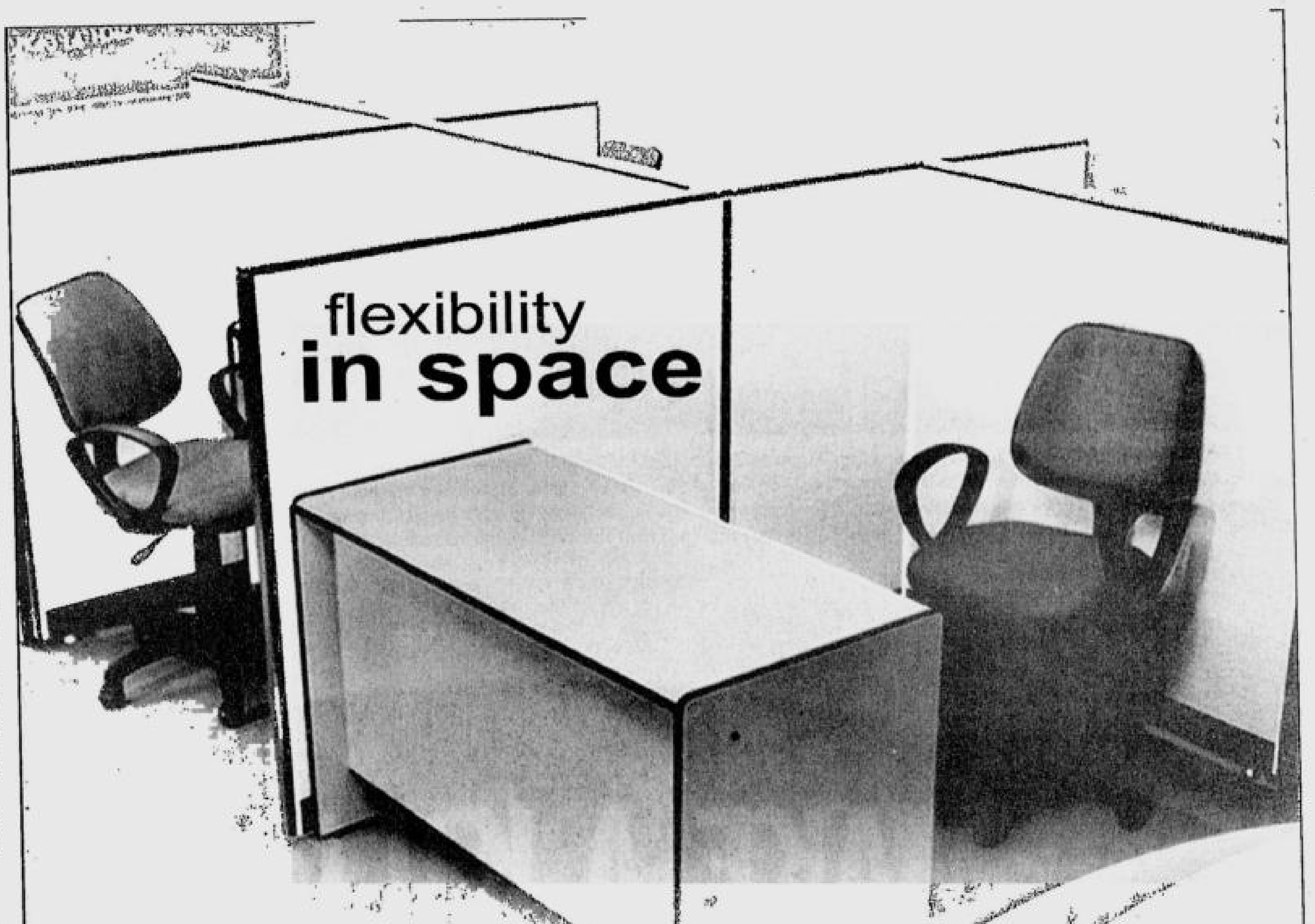
Although this activity is the result of the weak points in the earth's surface, experts are not convinced that they create a ripple, or domino, effect of one quake setting off another.

"Earthquakes do tend to happen in clusters but they aren't triggered by one another," he said.

"The seismic wave created by an earthquake can travel for hundreds of kilometers and then dissipate. The earth's crust is actually very good at absorbing that energy. *Reports from AFP and AP*

UNCERTAIN FUTURE. An unidentified boy ponders his future after surviving the earthquake that killed more than 4,300 people in Indonesia. More than 200,000 people were left homeless by the quake, the second natural disaster to strike Indonesia since the December 2004 tsunami that killed 200,000 people across Asia. AFP

HIS ONLY BREAKFAST. Noodles are the only breakfast for one of the many boys injured in the deadly quake that hit Indonesia. More than 10,000 people were injured in the quake. AFP



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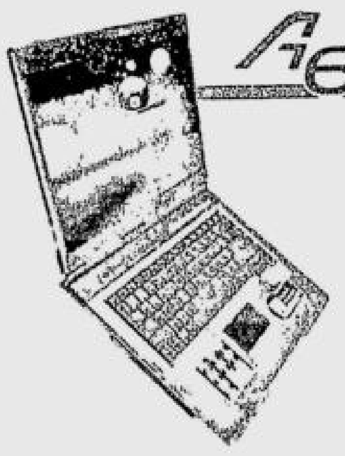

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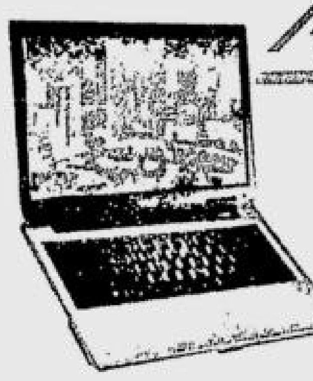

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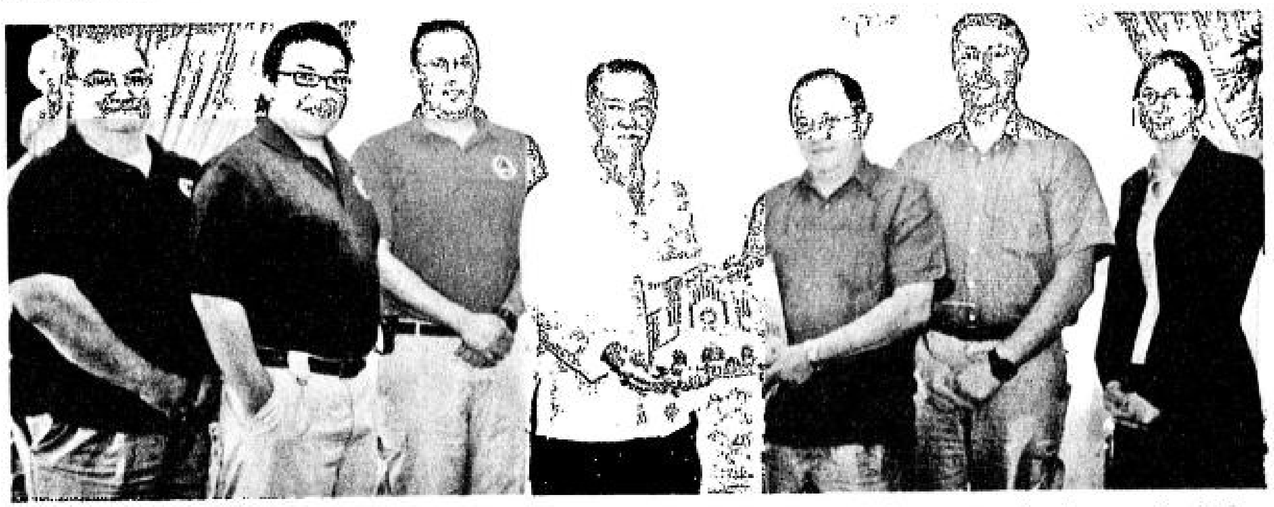


US CLEANUP OF MERCURY SPILL. Parañaque Rep. Eduardo Zialcita (3rd from right) presents to businessman Lucio C. Tan a coffee table book about the city for his support in the cleanup of the mercury spill at St. Andrew's School-Parañaque. Also in photo are the US Environmental Protection Agency scientists who helped in the cleanup: Philip Campagna, Steve Calanog, Brian Brass and Duane Newell. At right is Valerie Santos of the US Embassy economic section.

Joker to Palace: Stop the 'loose cannons' at PCGG

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. JOKER ARROYO YESTERDAY URGED Malacañang to stop the "loose cannons" in the Presidential Commission on Good Government from striking a deal with the Marcos family and to make its position clear in the matter.

Otherwise, the government would lose the "moral high ground on accountability," the maverick administration lawmaker warned.

"The PCGG chair and its commissioners are loose cannons. They can't do that on their own (make deals)," said Arroyo, a former human rights lawyer, in a phone interview.

Malacañang, he stressed, "must step in in the current PCGG mess and make a policy pronouncement on the matter."

"You can't let loose cannons talk more and lose the government moral high ground on accountability. That's what the government is all about—accountability of public funds," he said.

Resolve criminal, civil cases

The PCGG, under Chair Camilo Sabio, has stepped up efforts to enter into a deal with the family of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, hoping to resolve the criminal and civil cases it has been pursuing against them the past 20 years.

Despite the criticism, PCGG Commissioner Ricardo Abcede has said he was pressing ahead with negotiations over the sharing of the Marcos assets estimated at between $5 billion and $10 billion, in exchange for the dropping of all cases.

While the Palace has defended the PCGG move, President Macapagal-Arroyo has neither encouraged nor dissuaded the PCGG officials from forging a compromise with the Marcoses, presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor has said.

Senator Arroyo stressed that the ill-gotten wealth cases were "essentially moral and accountability issues."

"The money issue is included because public funds are involved and, therefore, must be recovered. But that is incidental to the moral issue," he said in a statement he issued after the interview.

Principle of accountability

"The statements of the PCGG officials undermine the inherent commitment of the government to uphold the principle of accountability without which no government can long exist," he said.

Abcede came under fire last week for inviting former First Lady Imelda Marcos to his birthday party and even dancing with her.

"What's wrong with that?" he had said, insisting his hobnobbing with her would not affect his job at the PCGG.

Arroyo also chided the PCGG officials for negotiating with the Marcoses over pending cases "whose status are not unfavorable to the government."

"So why settle? One settles because he is in a weak position and the government is not so situated," he said, pointing out that past Supreme Court decisions on Marcos cases had been "generally favorable" to the government.

In a radio interview, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. reiterated that he was open to a deal with the Marcoses on condition they fully disclose all their ill-gotten wealth and the assets are divided 90-10 in favor of the government.

He stressed, however, that only the civil, not the criminal, cases be the subject of any compromise.

Defending Salonga

Arroyo also chided Abcede for belittling the accomplishments of past PCGG chairs, including former Senate President Jovito Salonga who recently criticized the current move to settle with the Marcoses and likened it to the Holocaust victims striking a deal with the Nazis.

Arroyo pointed out that in the recent Senate budget hearings it was established that an estimated P60 billion had been turned over by previous PCGG administrations to the Department of Agrarian Reform for the beneficiaries of land reform in keeping with the law.

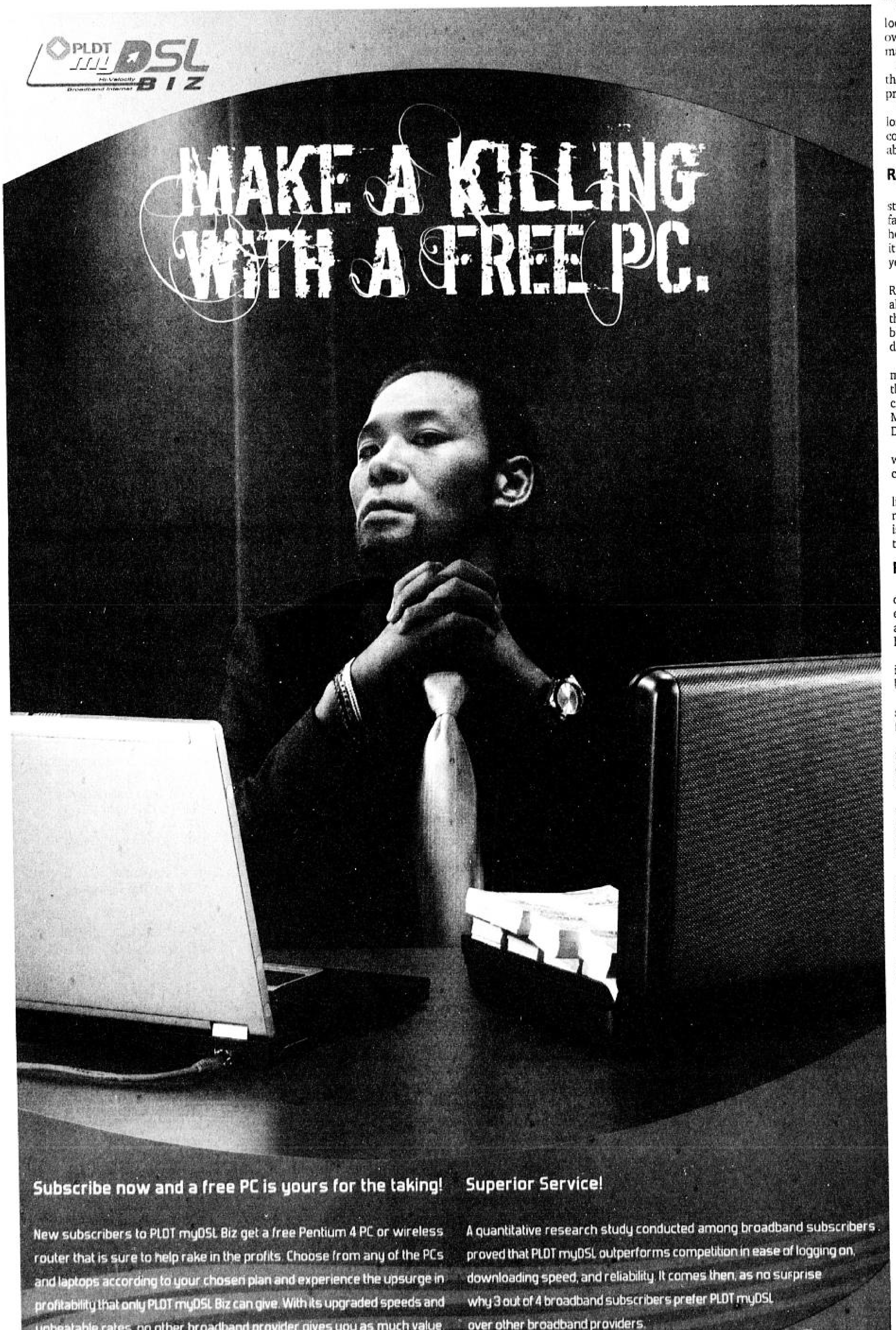
"Without those funds, tenant beneficiaries would not have the lands they presently own," Arroyo said.

"Yet the present PCGG, which did not contribute one centavo to the P60 billion, has the gall to belittle the work of the past commissions under four presidents and crows that it can do better through compromise, overlooking the fact that the status of the remaining pending cases are not unfavorable to the government," he said.

Arroyo also wondered what could be behind the negotiations between the PCGG and the Marcoses.

"One thing is missing in all this brouhaha. It is an axiom that even before one starts with negotiations, the parties must agree on an inventory or list of what will be discussed," he said.

"Both the Marcoses and the PCGG are ominously silent on that inventory. Public funds are involved. The public has the right to know. That cannot be ignored."



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Rains topple wall; boy killed, 6 hurt

By DJ Yap

A BOY WAS KILLED WHILE SIX PERSONS were hurt the other day after a wall collapsed due to heavy rains and hit several houses in a depressed area in Quezon City.

At around 9 p.m. Saturday, rains poured down on Purok 21, Barangay Commonwealth and floodwater began collecting at the base of a 10-foot wall which separated a compound of shanties from the nearby Ideal Subdivision.

The floodwater later spilled over the wall which collapsed and was swept toward the shanties, witnesses said.

A 4-year-old boy identified as John Lloyd Sibelo drowned in the floodwater, said investigator PO2 Leo Nino Pasco.

Sibelo was rushed to the Far Eastern University Hospital but he was pronounced dead on arrival at 9:22 p.m.

The boy's mother Marivic and his siblings Junel, 7, Michael, 13, and Thomy, 12, sustained slight cuts and scratches. They also suffered from electric shock after a live wire fell into the water, Pasco said.

Two other persons identified as Christy Alaryaw, 18, and Ryza Alaryaw, 1, also sustained slight scratches, police said.

Their shanty, along with the houses of at least three other families, was wrecked.

Police said some of the families were planning to file charges against subdivision homeowners who had ordered the construction of the wall.

But the father of the drowned victim, Turano Sibelo, told the INQUIRER that they would probably not be able to pursue the case, since they did not have the money for legal fees.

He added, though, that he would take up the matter with barangay officials.

SIMPLE PLEASURES
A boatman rests, content to let his vessel drift on the water while waiting for the sun to set on Manila Bay. ERIK ARAZAS

QC cops recover stolen van

HOURS AFTER IT WAS TAKEN at gunpoint by three men, a Toyota Innova owned by the daughter of former congressman Sergio Apostol was found abandoned in Quezon City yesterday.

Quezon City police discovered the vehicle of Amelyn Apostol-Buenviaje in Sitio Talanay, Barangay Batasan Hills at about 8 a.m., according to investigators.

The van, with plate number ZCX 472, was stolen on Saturday night by three men wielding .45-cal. pistols, said investigator SPO1 Omar Enomis of the Batasan Hills Police Station.

The victim had just boarded the vehicle, parked along Maginhawa Street in UP Village, when the suspects approached her and ordered her to get off, police said.

Police initially thought it was a "carjacking" case but they are now investigating other angles after the recovery of the vehicle.

"Nothing was taken from the vehicle. All the car parts and the victim's belongings were intact," Enomis noted.

DJ Yap

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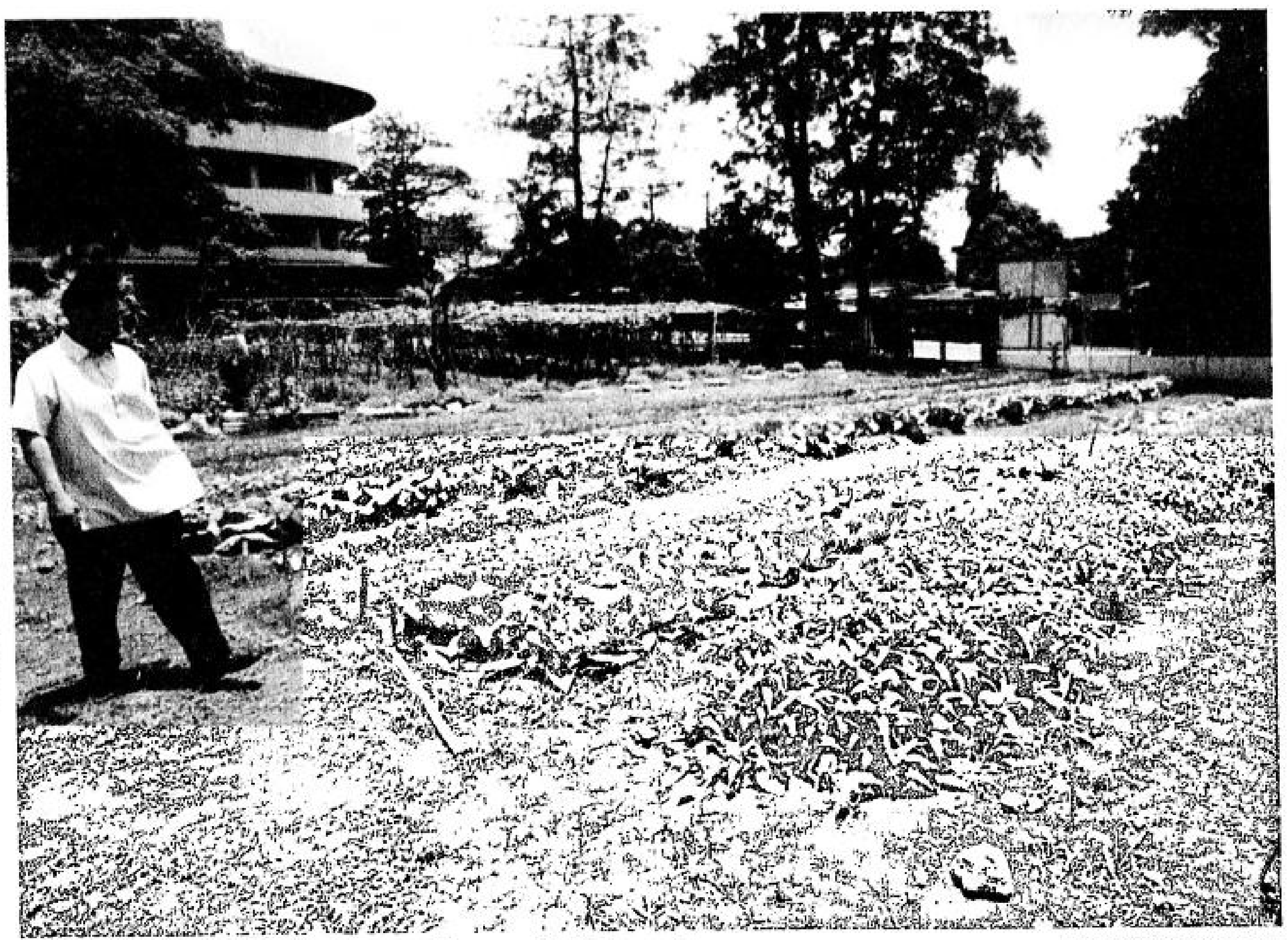
A tradition of leadership

JUANITO Alba, Caloocan's chief agriculturist, tends his garden: a 2,300-sq m lot at the back of City Hall which used to be a garage.



CORN, cabbage, carrots and other vegetables grow in Alba's garden.

PHOTOS BY RANDY HORMILLOSA

Urban gardens grow in Caloocan

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THE LACK OF SPACE SHOULD NOT stop one from having a garden.

"Plants can grow anywhere, even in your own bathroom," said Juanito Alba, Caloocan City chief agriculturist.

He spoke to the INQUIRER while inspecting the mushroom house in the city government's urban garden farm located on Camarin Road in Bagong Silang.

Mushrooms, for example, can be grown inside the bathroom, Alba said. All that one needs is driftwood and moss—items that cost P10—which can be hung near the shower.

"The moisture in the air when someone takes a shower and the carbon dioxide emitted by the human body is sufficient for the plant to grow," the agriculturist said.

Any space available

According to Alba, plant growing should not depend on the space available.

Plants could also be grown in plastic cups, soft drink bottles, discarded toilet bowls, old tires, or any container which you could put soil into.

"By putting up your own garden, you could enjoy plants and earn as well," Alba said.

To prove it, the chief agriculturist gave the INQUIRER a tour of his urban garden—a 2,300-sq m lot which used to be the garage of the City Hall.

In the middle of the garden are an array of plastic cups, old tires and styrofoam containers in which a variety of plants are growing.

Different varieties

Also found in the garden are assorted vegetables—from radishes, carrots, *kangkong*, onions, broccoli, cauliflower and *pechay*—among others. Since news about the urban garden broke out, some housewives and residents in nearby areas have been flocking to the area to buy vegetables.

"Our prices are cheaper compared to wet markets and buyers can even harvest the vegetables themselves if they want to," the agriculturist said.

There are also herbal plants, fruit trees and mahogany saplings which would be planted later on along major roads in the city.

Alba refers to his garden as "a showcase which could be replicated in other areas in the city where there are idle lands."

He said the project is in line with the Caloocan City government's greening program which aims to alleviate poverty and in the process, bring crimes down.

"Instead of getting drunk which usually ends in fighting, people could be busy planting and talking about their crops," the agriculturist said.

Aside from encouraging hard work and productivity, garden tenders would also never go hungry as long as they plant vegetables, Alba added.

He pointed to radish, cabbage, *pechay*, carrots, tomato, chinese *kangkong*, onions and "creepers" like *ampalaya, patola, upo* and squash as low-maintenance plants that could be grown easily.

TO GROW mushrooms, all you need is driftwood and moss.

Ready to share

"Our urban garden workers are ready to share their skills with anyone who is interested in having a garden of their own," Alba said.

According to him, he has long been advocating urban gardens but failed to enlist the support of previous officials of the city government.

"There were projects in the past but they did not push through because of politics," Alba said. Thanks to Sen. Loi Ejercito and City Mayor Enrico Echiverri, the project has finally gotten off the ground.

After its launching last month, some idle lands in the city, with the permission of their owners, have already been converted into community gardens. Barangay Silang, the biggest barangay in the city, will also soon have its own pocket and mini-gardens, Alba said.

"We also want to encourage the putting up of community gardens, particularly in densely populated areas where there are lots of jobless residents. We will be teaching them to appreciate hard work and how to earn from it," he added.

MMDA begins clearing sidewalks

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA DEVElopment Authority will be clearing sidewalks leading to schools starting today to help students get to their classes quickly and safely.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said yesterday that the agency's Sidewalk Clearing Operations Group would be conducting week-long simultaneous operations throughout Metro Manila in preparation for the opening of classes next month.

"We will have operations all over Metro Manila in time for the opening of classes so that the sidewalks would be safe and orderly for our students. We would have operations in areas near schools where there are many vendors and other obstructions on the sidewalk," Fernando told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

Some areas being targeted for clearing operations are Aurora Boulevard in Quezon City and the University Belt in Manila.

"We will confiscate goods and any obstruction we find on the sidewalk. Anything on the sidewalk is considered common garbage," said Fernando.

He said the agency has already informed those who may be affected by the operation.

For the past four years, the MMDA has been implementing sidewalk clearing operations which include the seizure of sidewalk vendors' wares, plus the removal of structures that occupy the road right-of-way.

Mishap leaves 1 dead, 2 hurt

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A PACKED PASSENGER JEEP WAS GOing down a flyover in Marikina City at around 7 p.m. Monday when driver Mauro Regidor, 31, suddenly lost control of the vehicle and hit at least three bystanders.

Regidor's passengers were unharmed but Diomedes Moises, 58, who was just standing in front of a bakery, was killed. Two others were injured, investigator SPO2 Sixto Paulino said.

Regidor told the police that he had just come from Cubao and was on his way to Marikina. As the jeep was traveling on Bonifacio Avenue, Barangay Barangka, a pedestrian suddenly crossed the street. Regidor said he stepped on the brakes but the jeep kept on moving.

He turned the wheel to the right and the vehicle went up on the sidewalk but it was still moving fast, Regidor said.

He added that he turned the wheel to the right to make it slow down but he hit Maricel Briones, 26, who was crossing the street.

The jeep continued moving as Regidor once again turned the wheel to the right. This time, the vehicle ran over Moises before hitting another passenger jeep parked on the street.

Ricky Geronimo, the driver of the other jeep, was also injured.

Regidor's jeep finally stopped after it hit a fire hydrant on the sidewalk.

The three victims were brought to the Amang Rodriguez Medical Center where Moises died while undergoing treatment.

THE PLACE TO BE

With classes set to open just a few days from now, parents, with their children in tow, flock to Divisoria to shop for school supplies.

RYAN LIM

METROBRIEFS

Death inside a bar

A CHINESE-Filipino septuagenarian died while allegedly drinking inside a KTV bar in Sta. Cruz, Manila shortly after midnight yesterday. Police identified the victim as Tian Lay Uy, 75, of 1210 Rizal Ave., Sta. Cruz, Manila. According to SPO2 Benito Cabatbat of the Manila Police District Homicide Section, the incident took place at around 1:20 a.m. at the TOP Royal KTV on Tomas Mapua Street, Sta. Cruz. Police said the victim suddenly experienced difficulty of breathing and collapsed while drinking. Uy was declared dead on arrival when he was taken to the Jose R. Reyes Memorial Medical Center for treatment, Cabatbat said.

Margaux C. Ortiz

QC's flood-prone areas

THE RIVER channel traversing Nepa Q-Mart, a public market in Quezon City, has been identified as a priority area in the city's flood control program this rainy season. Aside from Nepa Q-Mart in Barangay West Kamias, other areas spread across 38 barangays have been identified as flood-prone areas. Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. has approved the purchase of declogging machines to rid canals, *esteros* and creeks in the city of garbage which clog the drainage system. He also ordered the installation of cyclone wires around channels to prevent people from throwing trash into waterways.

DJ Yap

Faster mail delivery

IN AN EFFORT to speed up its mail distribution service, the Philippine Postal Corp. (PhilPost) has purchased 49 brand-new mail vans. Postmaster general Dario Rama said the Mitsubishi L-300 vans, which will be added to the company's fleet of vehicles, would ensure faster delivery of letters and packages throughout the country. "We are confident that the recent acquisition of brand new mail vans will boost our capabilities to better serve the mailing public and attract more institutional mailers to patronize the services of PhilPost," Rama said in a statement.

Tina G. Santos

Training for teachers

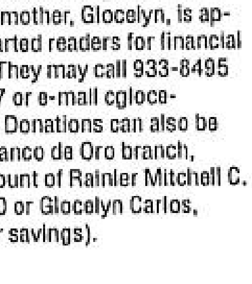
TEACHERS in Marikina City have just completed a five-day training program aimed at updating them on different teaching strategies in order to raise the quality of instruction in the city. The program, held from May 22 to 26, had the theme, "Moving toward Excellence through Character Transportation." Some of the speakers during the training program were Dr. Queena Lee Chua of the Ateneo de Manila University, "The Effective Teacher" and Dr. Renato Solidum of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, "Environmental and Natural Hazards." Dr. Teresita G. Domalanta, Director IV of the Department of Education-National Capital Region, was the keynote speaker during the opening program while Marikina Mayor Ma. Lourdes C. Fernando was the guest of honor.

Homeless no more

EIGHTY families who used to live on other people's property now have a place they can call their own. The Quezon City government has awarded certificates of condominium titles to a new batch of beneficiaries for its low-cost housing program in Barangay Escopa, Project 4. The beneficiaries, including 25 City Hall employees, will occupy a five-story condominium-type building located just a block away from Aurora Boulevard and the Metro Rail and Light Rail Transit stations. They will live in a unit measuring 15-sq m, each equipped with its own water supply, electrical connection, concrete roof deck and fire alarm system. Each unit has a selling price ranging from P161,969 to P225,000 and may be availed of through lump sum or staggered payments.

DJ Yap

Boy needs new liver



SEVEN-year-old Rainier Mitchell Carlos needs your help. Diagnosed with Billary Atresia, a liver disease characterized by the absence or closure of bile ducts. Rainier's only chance at survival is a liver transplant. Rainier was operated on in July 1999 but he still needs a new liver. Since liver transplants are not done in the country, he needs around P3 million to P4 million to undergo an operation in Taiwan. His mother, Glocelyn, is appealing to kind-hearted readers for financial and medical help. They may call 933-8495 and 0918-3929927 or e-mail cglocelyn@hotmail.com. Donations can also be deposited in any Banco de Oro branch, payable to the account of Rainier Mitchell C. Carlos, 330112910 or Glocelyn Carlos, 330169963 (dollar savings).

Pope gives hope for quick John Paul sainthood

KRAKOW, POLAND—"I AM STILL alive," Pope John Paul II, then 79 and ill already for years, mused on his last trip to his hometown in 1999. On Saturday, his successor, Benedict XVI, suggested again that Poland's favorite son would live on as a saint, telling pilgrims at a shrine that he hoped it would happen soon.

The new Pope's impromptu remarks drew wild applause from about 15,000 people—some holding signs saying, "Sainthood now!"—who had gathered to see Benedict on the third day of a pilgrimage to the places that shaped the life of John Paul, who died in April 2005.

Benedict showed no sign of exercising his right as Pope to proclaim John Paul a saint immediately, though he has already waived the usual five-year waiting period after death.

But in speaking with such emotion and certainty, Benedict seemed to cut a quick path to Poles' hearts, in a trip both "sentimental," as he called it, and strategic in its appeal for this Catholic country not to dilute its faith as it becomes richer and more European.

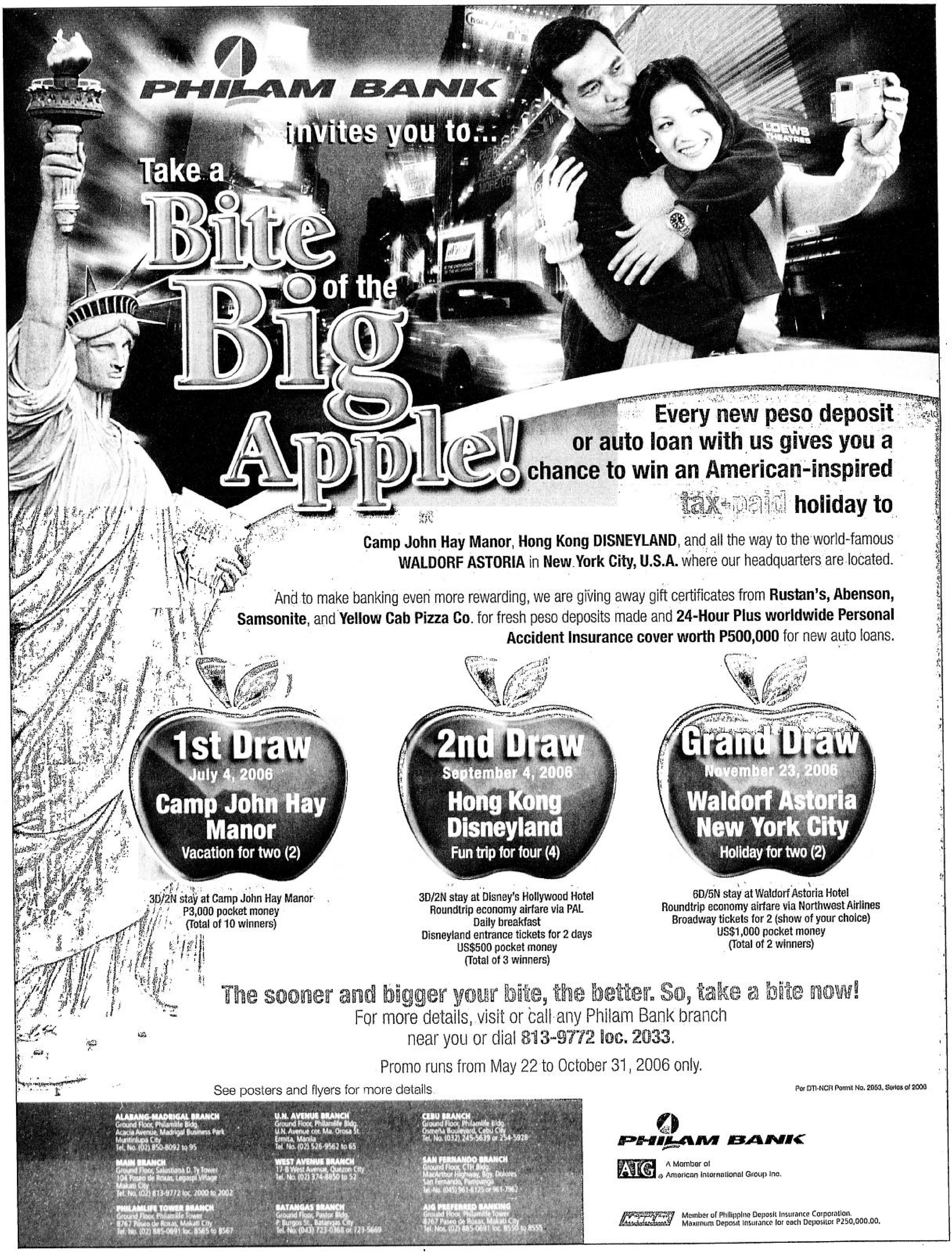
On Saturday morning, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, for decades John Paul's assistant, now the archbishop of Krakow, greeted Benedict on a trip to John Paul's hometown, Wadowice, where on his final trip home, in 1999, John Paul allowed himself a flood of public memories:

"In this town everything started," he said at the time. "Life started. School started, my studies." He paused, then continued: "My priesthood started."

On Saturday, before a thick and cheering crowd on the central square, Benedict visited two landmarks: He went to his predecessor's old church, the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, then crossed a cobblestone street to see the house where the Pope, born Karol Wojtyla, was born and grew up.

"I wished to stop precisely here, in the place where his faith began and matured, to pray together with all of you that he may soon be elevated to the glory of the altars," Benedict told the crowd, using less direct language about the possibility of sainthood than he did a little later at the shrine at Zebrzydowska. The night before here in Krakow, he also mentioned the possibility of sainthood for John Paul. *NYT*

POPE Benedict XVI in Krakow, Poland, May 27, brought joy to Poles by announcing that he hopes John Paul II will be made a saint "in the near future." AP



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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Iran president consolidating power

TEHRAN, IRAN—PRESIDENT MAHMOUD AHMADINEJAD is trying to consolidate power in the office of the presidency in a way never before seen in the 27-year history of the Islamic Republic, apparently with the tacit approval of Iran's supreme leader, according to government officials and political analysts here.

That rare unity of elected and religious leadership at the highest levels offers the United States an opportunity to talk to a government, however combative, that has often spoken with multiple voices at cross purposes.

But if the United States, which severed relations with Iran after the 1979 revolution, opened such a dialogue, it could boost the prestige of the Iranian president, who has pushed toward confrontation with the West.

Political analysts and people close to the government here say that Ahmadinejad and his allies are trying to buttress a system of conservative clerical rule that had lost credibility with the public. Their strategy hinges on trying to win concessions from the West on Iran's nuclear program and opening direct, high-level talks with the United States, while easing social restrictions, cracking down on political dissent and building a new political class from outside the clergy.

Ahmadinejad is pressing far beyond the boundaries set by other presidents. For the first time since the revolution, a president has overshadowed the nation's chief cleric, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on both domestic and international affairs.

"Usually the supreme leader would be the front-runner in all internal and external issues," said Hamidreza Taraghi, the political director of the strongly conservative Islamic Coalition Party. "Here we have the president out front on all these issues and the supreme leader is supporting him."

The changing nature of Iran's domestic political landscape has potentially far-reaching implications for the United States. While Iran has adopted a confrontational approach toward the West, it has also signaled—however clumsily—a desire to mend relations. Though the content of Ahmadinejad's letter to President Bush was widely mocked here and in Washington for its religious focus and preachy tone, it played well to Iran's most conservative religious leaders. Analysts here said that it represented both Ahmadinejad's independence and his position as a messenger for the system, and that the very act of reaching out was significant.

"If the US had relations with Iran under the reform government, it would not have been a complete relationship," said Alireza Akhari, a retired general with the Revolutionary Guard and former deputy defense minister, referring to the administration of former President Mohammad Khatami. "But if there can be a detente now, that means the whole country is behind relations with the West." *NYT*

ST. PETERSBURG'S 300TH YEAR

Russian girls in costumes parade along a St. Petersburg street during a carnival to mark the city's 300th birthday, May 27. AP

With illegals engaged to fight wildfires, US West faces dilemma

By Kirk Johnson

SALEM, ORE.—THE DEBATE over immigration, which has filtered into almost every corner of American life in recent months, is now sweeping through the woods, and the implications could be immense for the coming fire season in the West.

As many as half of the roughly 5,000 private firefighters based in the Pacific Northwest and contracted by state and federal governments to fight forest fires are immigrants, mostly from Mexico. And many of them are working here illegally.

A recent report by the inspector general for the US Forest Service said illegal immigrants had been fighting fires for several years. The Forest Service said in response that it would work with immigration and customs enforcement officers and the Social Security Administration to improve the process of identifying violators.

Oregon, which administers private fire contracts for the Forest Service, has imposed tougher rules on companies that employ firefighters, including a requirement that firefighting crew leaders have a working command of English and a formal business location where crew members can assemble.

Some Hispanic contractors say the changes could cause many immigrants to stay away from the jobs. Other forestry workers say that firefighting may simply be too important—and too difficult to attract other applicants—to allow for a crackdown on illegal workers.

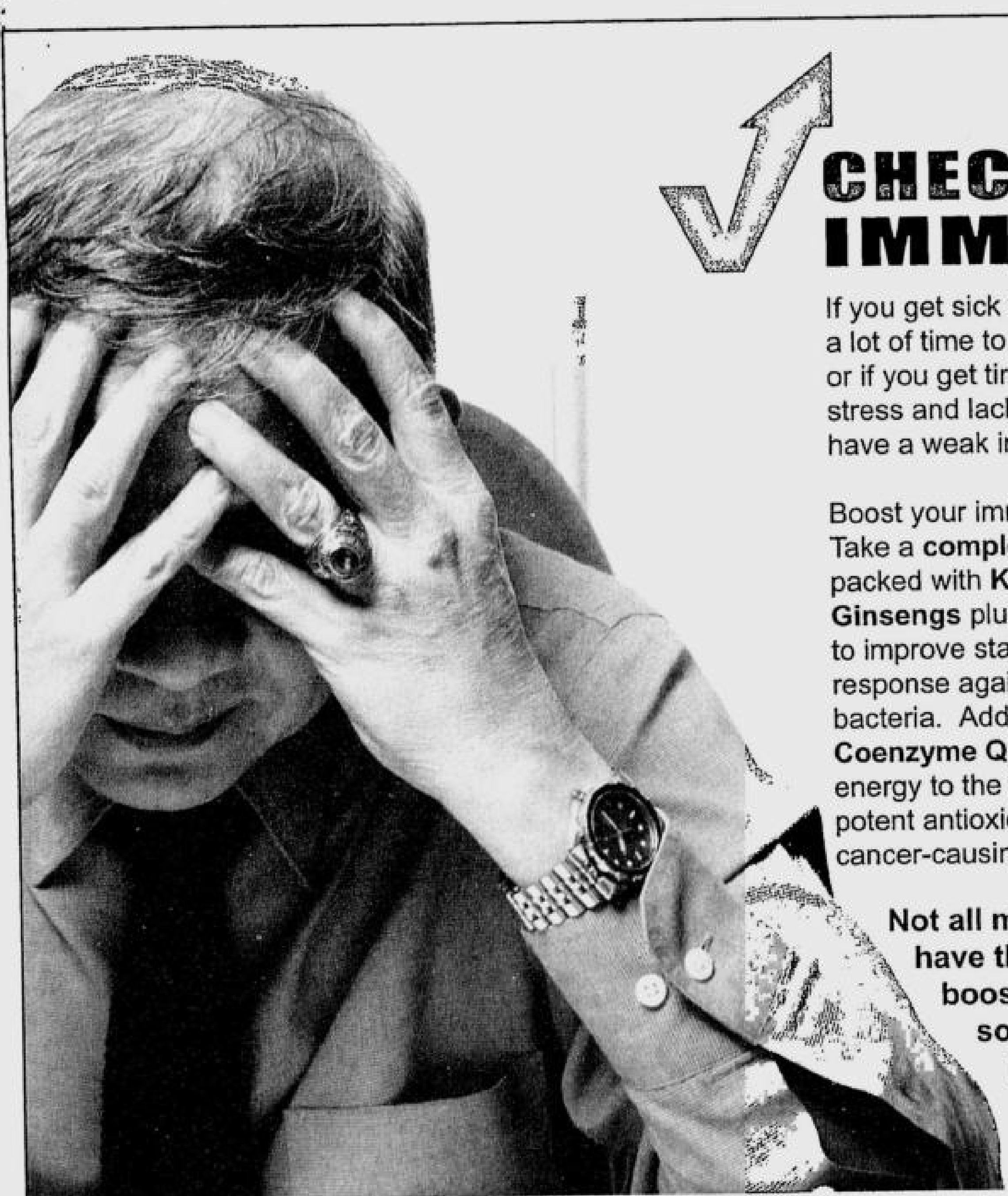
"I don't think it's in anybody's interest, including the Forest Service, to enforce immigration—they're benefiting from it," said Blanca Escobeda, owner of 3B's Forestry in Medford, Ore., which fields two 20-person fire crews.

The private contract crews can be dispatched through the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, to anywhere in the country where fires get too big or too numerous for local entities to handle.

The work, which pays $10 to $15 an hour, is demanding and dangerous. A workweek fighting a big fire can go 100 hours.

The plight of the fire companies underscores the surprising directions that the debate over immigration can lead, like government-required bilingualism to ensure everyone on a fire line can understand one another, while threatening to scare away needed workers.

Serafin Garcia, who came from Mexico in the '80s and started a fire company in Salem in 2001, said the new rules could ruin him. Not only is he likely to lose workers, but some industry officials suggest that larger fire companies, which tend to be owned by non-Hispanics, could crush smaller competitors like Garcia, using immigration and safety concerns as a smokescreen. *NYT*



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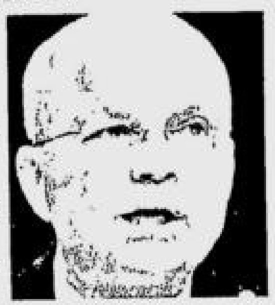
WORLDBRIEFS

CIA nominee Hayden confirmed



HAYDEN AFP

WASHINGTON—The Senate overwhelmingly confirmed Gen. Michael V. Hayden on Friday as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, despite some senators' criticism of his role in overseeing a domestic electronic surveillance program. The 78-15 vote showed that Hayden's popularity on Capitol Hill as an articulate advocate for the spy agencies outweighed doubts about the legality of the eavesdropping program he ran as director of the National Security Agency. The only Republican to vote against confirmation was Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, who has said he believes the program violates the law. Some senators suggested that they had set aside concerns about the program in part because they believed that Hayden could restore morale and purpose at the CIA after the tumultuous 19-month directorship of Porter J. Goss. Goss, a former Republican congressman, was forced to resign after failing to recover from a rocky start in 2004, when his top staff members clashed with agency veterans. *NYT*

Fighting rages in Somali capital

MOGADISHU—Heavy fighting between Islamic and secular militia flared Saturday in the Somali capital Mogadishu, rocking the city with a surge in the worst violence it has seen in years, with no sign of a pause, witnesses said. At least 23 people were killed and 44 others wounded in two districts, where Islamic militia and fighters loyal to a US-backed warlord alliance pounded each other with heavy machinegun, rocket, artillery and mortar fire, raising the death toll and sending thousands fleeing for safety. In addition to Saturday's casualties from heavy artillery duels in the northern Galgalato and southern Daynile districts, two civilians wounded in Thursday's clashes died, pushing up the toll, medics said. "The fighting is intensifying on the Daynile side. I never seen a battle like this since 1991," said Ahmed Mohamed Ghele, a witness. The fighting, which has defied international calls for a truce, pits Islamists against the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT), which was set up in February with US backing to curb the growing influence of Islamic courts and to track down extremists, including al-Qaida members, that they are allegedly harboring. The increasingly powerful and influential courts, which have declared a holy war against the alliance—which they say is financed by the "enemy of Islam"—deny the accusations. *AFP*

Sharon moved to long-term care facility

SHARON AFP

JERUSALEM—Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has been in a coma for nearly five months, left Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem in an ambulance Sunday en route to a long-term care facility in Tel Aviv, hospital officials said. Sharon's transfer to Sheba Medical Center, a facility more suited to providing him with extended care, signaled his medical team did not believe he was likely to emerge any time soon from the coma he fell into after suffering a devastating stroke Jan. 4. Dr. Yuli Krieger, the deputy head of Levinstein House, another long-term care facility, told Israel Radio on Sunday that the 78-year-old former leader's chances of waking up after such a lengthy coma were small. Sharon had a small stroke in December and was put on blood thinners before he suffered a severe brain hemorrhage in January. The Israeli leader underwent several, extensive brain surgeries to stop the bleeding, and many independent experts doubted that he would ever recover. *AP*

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- Filipinos buck Torre defeat to down Ecuadorans /A30

SPORTS
E-mail: pr_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
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WHAT'S INSIDE

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Strange goes wire-to-wire; Pagunsan 6th

By Musong R. Castillo

EMPHATIC.

WITH HIS PURSUERS UNABLE TO KEEP in step, Australia's Scott Strange pulled away to a five-stroke win yesterday even as Juvic Pagunsan came back from a third-round meltdown to emerge as the top Filipino in the 90th Philippine Open at Wack Wack.

The 29-year-old from Perth capped his wire-to-wire romp with a 2-under-par 70 for a 280 total that rewarded him with the largest margin of victory in the Asian Tour this year.

"I had a birdie on first and that dictated my day and the pursuers dropped out (of the chase)," said Strange, whose second career Asian Tour win, worth $30,700, boosted him to the Top 10 of the Order of Merit with $149,024 in earnings.

"It was pretty exhausting, the weather and all," added Strange. "But it was worth it."

Korean youngster Park Jun-won rallied from 16th place with the day's best round of 67 at the famed East course and took second place at 285.

Taiwan's Lu Wei-lan shot a 71 and tied for third place with compatriot Yeh Chang-ting (75) and England's Chris Rodgers (72) at 286.

Then came Pagunsan, a two-time runner-up in this event when he was the country's top amateur. He closed out with a par 72 to wind up in a tie for sixth at 288 with Australian Unho Park (72). They won $6,300 each (about P318,000).

Pagunsan, the winner of the The Country Club Invitational early this year on his pro debut, came within two strokes of Strange in the third round but dropped five strokes in the last three holes and fell out of contention with a 74.

Tied for third after the third round, Cookie La'O wound up in a deadlock for eighth after carding a 75 for 289, along with Aussies Gary Simpson (72) and Jason Dawes (70).

Gerald Rosales, the 2000 champion at Riviera and second placer last year, submitted a 71 and shared 12th spot with SSP Chowrasia (73) of India and Adam Porter (74) of Australia with 290 tallies. They won $3,176 each.

Angelo Que ballooned to a final round 76 for 292, in a tie with another notable, 2002 winner Rick Gibson, who fired a 75.

"I'll absolutely be back and defend in January," said Strange, whose Asian Tour breakthrough win came in last year's Myanmar Open.

He had earlier rounds of 68-70-72.

Strange scattered four birdies in his first 14 holes and bogeys on the 15th and 17th did little to slow him down.

This tournament will be the Asian Tour's kickoff leg next year with the purse to be increased to $500,000. Wack Wack will remain as host until 2008.

Strange became the second straight Australian winner of the event after Adam Le Vesconte, who prevailed at Mount Malarayat last year. Le Vesconte fired a 71 and finished tied for 15th spot at 291.

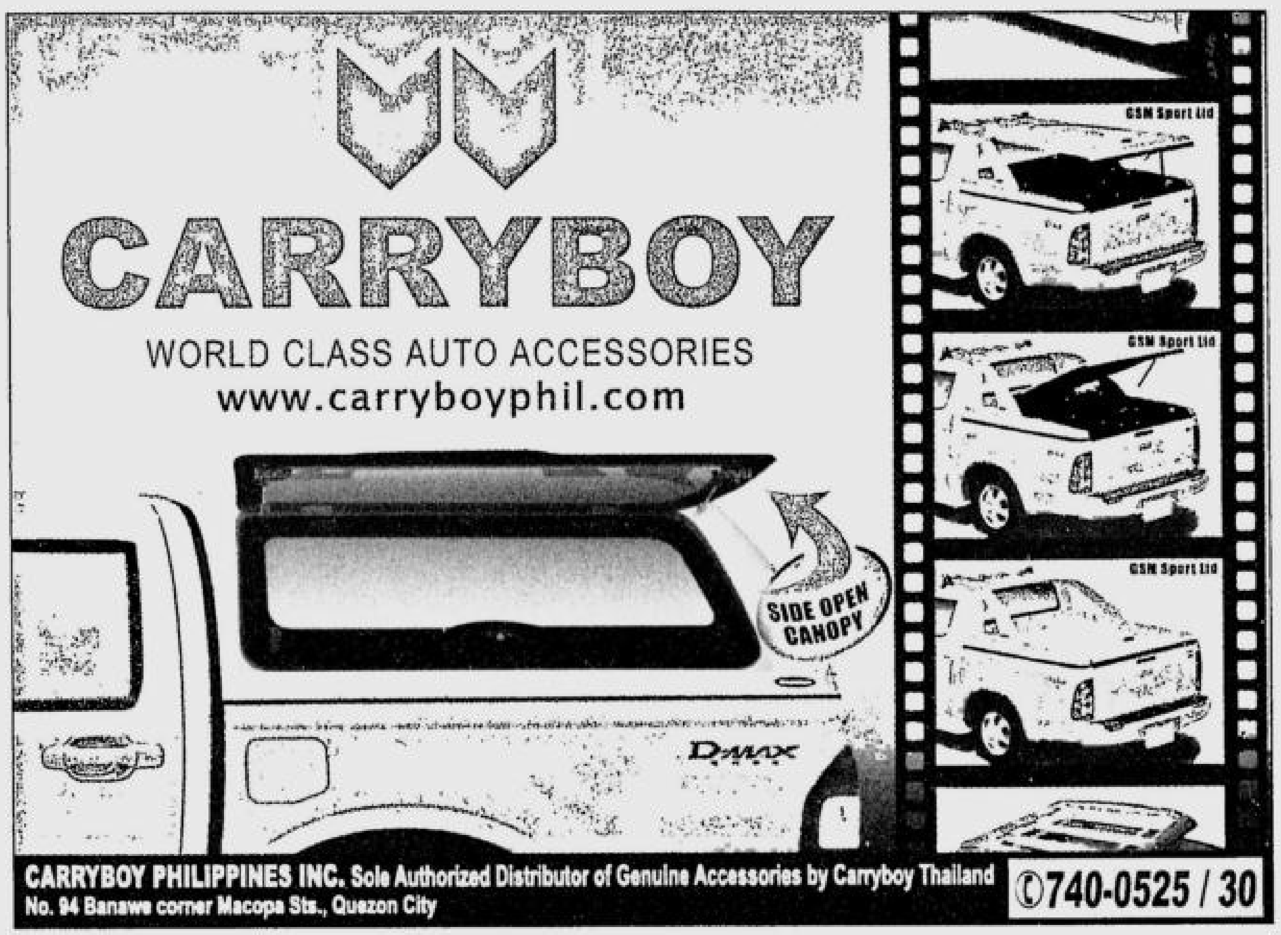
Marvin Dumandan won low amateur honors, firing a 74 for 296 to finish four up on Jay Bayron (79). Michael Bibat wound up third at 301 after a 75.

PHILIPPINE OPEN
MOTOROLA

"WELL WORTH IT": Australian Scott Strange shows his champion's trophy. RUDY ESPERAS

The final round scores

280—S. Strange (Aus) 68-70-72-70; 285—Park JW (Kor) 75-74-69-67; 286—C. Rodgers (Eng) 70-69-75-72, Lu WL (Tpe) 69-74-72-71, Yeh CT (Tpe) 69-69-73-75; 288—J. Pagunsan 72-70-74-72, U. Park (Aus) 72-71-73-72; 289—J. Dawes (Aus) 70-75-74-70, G. Simpson (Aus) 71-72-74-72, Hsieh CS (Tpe) 71-73-71-74, C. La'O 70-74-70-75; 290—G. Rosales 73-72-74-71, S.S.P. Chowrasia (Ind) 74-72-71-73, A. Porker (Aus) 73-72-71-74; 291—A. Le Vesconte (Aus) 74-76-70-71, J. Knutzon (US) 73-71-76-71, B. Hume (Sco) 69-76-74-72; 292—A. Presnell (Aus) 73-75-72-72, J. Lupprian (Ger) 72-76-72-72, G. Rusnak (US) 73-74-73-72, A. Kang (US) 72-72-74-74, M. Both (Aus) 73-70-74-75, R. Gibson (Can) 70-72-75-75, R. Moir (Aus) 77-69-71-75, A. Que 71-75-70-76; 294—M. Pucay 72-75-74-73, A. R. Zahari (Mas) 73-70-78-73, Wang TC (Tpe) 74-72-76-72, E. Salvador 78-70-71-75, U. Singh Mundy (Ind) 75-74-69-76; 295—L. Austin (Aus) 74-71-77-73, R. Ismail (Mas) 72-76-72-75, G. Mann (Ind) 73-73-72-77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Filipinos buck Torre defeat to down Ecuadorans

By Roy Luarca

TURIN, ITALY—THE PHILIPPINES STRUCK on the lower boards Saturday to trounce Ecuador, 3-1, and get back on track in the 37th Chess Olympiad at the Olympic Village here.

Two-time national champion Darwin Laylo and Fide Masters Oliver Dimakiling and Wesley So won their games on boards 2, 3 and 4, respectively, to compensate for the loss of Grandmaster Eugene Torre on board 1.

The Filipinas, weren't as lucky, however, as they bowed to the Belarusians, 2.5-1.5, and tumbled anew in the distaff side.

Handling white, Armyman Laylo beat International Master Daniel Mieles in 47 moves of a Colle System Opening while former La Salle star Dimakiling deftly handled black to down Miguel Medina in 43 moves of a Reti.

The 12-year-old So, an incoming high school freshman at St. Francis-Bacoor, finished off the Ecuadorians by trouncing IM Plinio Pazos in 60 moves of a Modern Defense.

Their second victory against three draws and a lone loss to the United Sates (2.5-1.5) gave the 35th-seeded Filipinos 14.5 points, good for a share of 30th-39th places in the men's division now led by Armenia with 18.

Top favorite Russia fell to third with 17 points after absorbing a 2.5-1.5 beating from the Netherlands in round 6.

"Another win and we'll be in a good position," said men's skipper Sammy Estimo.

That won't be easy, though, as the Filipinos are slated to face the all-GM Icelanders, ranked 27th, in round 7 on Sunday.

Estimo will be fielding GM Mark Paragua on board 1, GM Rogelio Antonio Jr. on board 2, Laylo on board 3 and Dimakiling on board 4.

Torre, who yielded to GM Carlos Franco Matamoros in 36 moves of an English Opening, will take a rest along with So, who has two wins and two draws thus far.

The 22-year-old Paragua said he'd try to exact revenge against his opponent, GM Hannes Hlifar Stefansson, who bested him in their lone meeting when he was about 10 years old.

Antonio will handle black against highly rated GM Johann Hjartasson (Elo 2619) while Laylo meets GM Henrik Danielsen. Dimakiling, who totes three points on three wins and one loss like Laylo, battles GM Throstur Thorhallson.

Against 50th-ranked Finland, women's team captain Cesar Caturla will be fielding WIM Sheerie Joy Lomibao, WNM Catherine Perena and WNM Sherily Cua in that order.

Lomibao will be pitted against WIM Nina Sammalvuo and Pereña against WIM Tanja Rantanen.

Pereña, a senior Sports Science student of the University of the Philippines, yielded to Nadezhda Aravora while WIM Beverly Mendoza bowed to WIM Tatiana Berlina as the Filipinas dropped to a share of 50th-59th places.

Cua saved the Filipinas from a shutout by drawing with WIM Anna Sharevich.

National Chess Federation of the Philippines president Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay is expected to arrive at the Olympic Village Sunday afternoon to boost the morale of the Philippine teams.

Round 6 standings

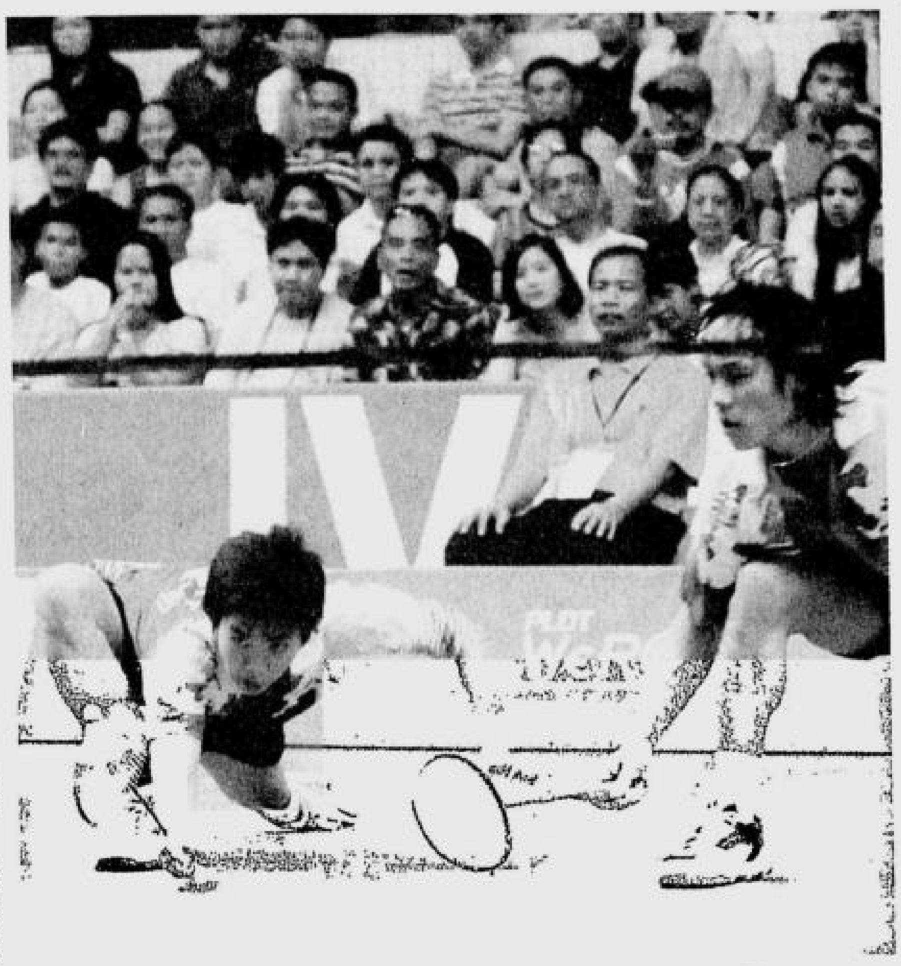
MEN: 18—Armenia; 17.5—Netherlands; 17—Russia, Belarus; 16.5—Ukraine, United States, Sweden, India; 16—Uzbekistan, Georgia, Czech Republic, Israel, Cuba, Poland, Brazil; 15.5—Bulgaria, Denmark, Iran, Hungary, Indonesia; 15—Greece, Spain, China, Slovena, France, Serbia & Montenegro, Vietnam, Moldova; 14.5—Germany, Iceland, Croatia, England, Norway, Peru, Colombia, Switzerland, Philippines, Malaysia

WOMEN: 14.5—Russia; 14—Ukraine; 13.5—Slovakia; 13—Romania, United States, India, Bulgaria; 12.5—Estonia, Hungary; 12—Mongolia, Georgia, Slovenia, Spain, Armenia; 11.5—Belarus, Latria, Kazakhstan; ... 9—Iceland, Philippines, Finland, Sweden, Malaysia, Peru, Italy B

Thai shuttlers just too tough for Asuncions

Top RP pair settles for 2nd

By Marc Anthony Reyes



SARALEE Thoungthongkam lunges for the feather with partner Sudket Prapakamol (right) in their match against the Asuncion siblings. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

SMASHED TO PIECES.

That was how Thailand ended the country's badminton aspirations in the mixed doubles final of the Bingo Bonanza Philippine Open championships yesterday at the Philsports.

The world No. 11 pair of Sudket Prapakamol and Saralee Thoungthongkam unleashed their finest forms to deal the country's pride, Kennie and Kennevic Asuncion, a 21-18, 21-16 decision last night to take the top mixed doubles prize of $7,320.

The Thais kept the shuttlecock low then hammered it at every opportunity to spoil the Filipinos' breakthrough bid for the title in the four-star tourney.

Malaysian Hafiz Hashim, the world's No. 11, kept his brother, Roslin, at bay to secure a 21-19, 21-7 win in their men's singles showdown and clinch the biggest purse of the tournament worth $9,600.

Saina Nehwal of Indian, only 16, finished off world No. 66 Pen Xian Julia Wong of Malaysia, 21-15, 22-20, to run away with the women's singles title.

Unranked Hong Kong shuttlers Albertus Susanto Njoto and Yohan Hadikusumo Wiratama whipped up an exciting upset victory over world 26 Hendra Gunawan and Joko Riyadi of Indonesia, 15-21, 21-19, 21-18, for the men's doubles title.

The all-Indonesian women's doubles went to world No. 21 Gresya Polii and Jo Novita, who downed Nur Sugianti Endang and Rani Mundiasti, 21-16, 21-13, in the event sponsored by JVC, PLDT and Smart.

The Asuncions, whose best finish in an international event was a bronze medal in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam, kept the match close but the Thais were simply better.

``We made a lot of errors but that's how the game is," said the 29-year-old Kennie, adding that it was their best performance in the three times they bowed to the Thai pair.

``We are just happy to play in front of our countrymen, they've been very supportive," said Kennevic.

The Thais wisely kept the bird low and put the hosts on the defensive early on through Prapakamol's booming smashes.

The Asuncions, who are expected to move up the world ranking from their present rating of 69, gave up nine unforced errors in the first set alone and could only make two winners the entire set.

Thoungthongkam and Prapakamol netted three straight returns as the Asuncions came within 18-19, but Kennie missed two kills to give up the set.

The count was 14-all in the second when Prapakamol whipped up another of his powerful smashes to touch off the fiery windup which ended with a kill that went past the dumbfounded Kennevic at match point.

The Filipinos had earlier bundled out two Indonesian tandems, including Sydney Olympic silver winner Tri Kusharjanto and Minarti Timur in the semifinals.

The son also rises

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THE RECENT APpointment by President Macapagal-Arroyo of sportsman Arnold "Ali" Atienza as Presidential Assistant on Youth and Sports is a welcome news.

With his youth and energy, management expertise (as chair of the Manila Sports Council since 2001), not to mention his passion for sports, the 33-year-old Ali is always a source of pride and inspiration to our national athletes. To residents of Manila, he is a young man going places who could very well carry on the legacy of his popular father, Mayor Lito Atienza.

Ali became the Asian taekwondo champion in 1994 when he was only 21. In 2001 at the age of 28, he was named Manila Sports Council chair, becoming the youngest ever to supervise the sports program of the country's premier city. During his term, Manila successfully hosted the annual under-17 Manila Youth Games, the MY National Invitational and the mass-oriented Manila Marathon.

On the Manila Sports Council, Ali said the thrust of the Masco program is to look for young, raw but highly motivated athletes from the grassroots and polish their skills and eventually transform them into world-class athletes. "This program has paid off because within a year's time our athletes have dominated sports at the national level. In less than two years, Masco has produced junior world and international champions."

Ali also noted that for many decades, most of those who gained prominence in the sporting scene came from families that had the means to support their financial and logistical needs. "Hardly could you see a young man or woman coming from the grassroots become champion athletes, except in few cases where some were lucky enough to catch the attention of generous sponsors."

"We owe these sponsors a lot. These are the engines that keep sports going."

* * *

HAZARDS OF CONTACT SPORTS: Who is to blame when athletes suffer injuries in contact sports such as soccer, boxing, American football, wrestling, baseball and basketball? No one is to blame.

According to a recent court decision, athletes assumed the risk of injury whenever they took part in sports, particularly in contact sports. Anyone participating in contact sports such as basketball and boxing can expect some of the contacts to be hard on the head and body. Bruises, sprains, broken bones, concussions—even deaths—have been known to occur.

In an article written for London's Sunday Telegraph Review, Dr. James Le Fanu said the modern athlete is vulnerable to a host of ailments. Some pitfalls facing the athlete: sudden death and a bewildering variety of acute injuries to bone and muscles.

* * *

PRAYERS AND CONDOLENCES: My family and I extend our deepest condolences to Gilbert Neo, a teammate of my son Manu at the Spring Cooking Oil basketball team, on the demise of his father, Guillermo Gayta Neo, who passed away on May 27 at the age of 58. His body lies at the family residence at Robina road, General Luis St., Nagkaisang Nayon, Novaliches, Quezon City.

Soccer: Look who's betraying the Filipino youth

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT ADMIRE MARIO Schuff, the Ambassador of Argentina to the Philippines.

The portly, vibrant Señor Schuff is a concerned diplomat who doesn't hesitate to help others.

He's particularly alarmed whenever he sees something wrong going on.

He also happens to be an honest, dedicated sportsman out to spread the gospel of even development through games, mainly football.

Himself full of life, Schuff, of German descent, did not hesitate to manifest urgent concern as he noted that the Philippines has not been enjoying all the goodness and gladness available to all nations of the world through the game of soccer.

* * *

With the gloomy look of things in playgrounds around Metro Manila, a visiting sports lover would readily suspect that football doesn't exist in the country.

Or, to put it more bluntly, the universal game that's embraced and followed passionately like religion by practically all nations on the planet has yet to be invented and introduced hereabouts.

How can that be? Schuff wondered in protest.

This was last Thursday at the exquisite Cafe Ysabel on the tree-lined side of P. Guevarra in San Juan, not too far from the old Marcos residence.

You see, with his solid build and firm face, it's hard to imagine the ambassador shedding tears.

* * *

But you could feel the man in grief as he noted, in sheer disbelief, the continuing death of football in the Philippines.

He rued the waste of talent and untapped greatness.

He manifested alarm during the local launch by officers of ATR-Torres World's Best Wines and Spirits, headed by Dr. Ruel Reyes, of a line of Sta. Julia spirits from Argentina.

The affair, a roast-out, gaucho-style, also coincided with an Argentine national day when there's feasting all over that country.

The way Ambassador Schuff would explain, his countrymen are already setting up for the forthcoming international sports picnic, more popularly known as the World Cup, the quadrennial football championship to be played in Germany early next month.

* * *

Brazil is the defending champion, Germany a strong favorite, but Argentina could be considered a dark horse.

"Well, we happen to have won the Olympic soccer gold in Athens in 2004," Schuff reminded with a naughty wink.

Of course, what most Filipino sports fans had not overlooked was that the Argentine national basketball team led by Manu Ginobili also won the gold medal in the Athens Olympics.

Anyway, Ambassador Schuff explained why he has been grieving over the state of football in the Philippines: If there's one people in Asia that's perfectly fit to play and excel in soccer, it's the Filipino.

Yes, he swore, the Filipino has the build, the grace, the quickness, native gifts that have made countries like Brazil and Argentina itself revered powers in the universal game of soccer.

* * *

Searching for a solution to the puzzle, the good ambassador could only shake his head in disbelief.

Why, soccer is a game perfect for Filipinos, he repeated.

No need to explain the fact that, unlike in basketball where short-limbed natives have had to reach for the sky to score, the goal is just there at ground level, always within reach, for the Filipino campaigner.

Why, why, why?

No, Ambassador Schuff did not want to condemn.

But he said something must be done to correct the sordid situation.

The government owes it to the youth of the land, to all sports-loving citizens.

* * *

In a way, Schuff must've smelled betrayal here.

"I know your football officials are getting big money from Fifa, the world football body, every year," Schuff bared.

He did not say how much, but the annual amount received by invisible Filipino officials—the names Romualdez and Adad came to fore—must have amounted to a fortune.

We say invisible football officials because they are again unseen and unheard once they have visited the bank.

There's practically no sign that something is being spent to revive soccer here.

An investigation appears in order.

Now, if the top officials of the Philippine Football Federation would at least bother to buy a coffin for the sport they've helped kill, something may yet happen to soccer in the Philippines.

Sorry, but even this sleepy government, no thanks to rampant corruption, would not qualify as pallbearer.

Long shot takes Cojuangco Cup

By Musong R. Castillo

CARMONA, CAVITE—THE CLOSE FINish validated how wide open it was.

And to the consternation of oddsmakers, a long-shot colt named Don Exequiel prevailed in the kick-off race of this year's Triple Crown series at the San Lazaro Leisure Park here yesterday.

Coaxed smartly by Ronald Baldonido, the fourth-ranked Don Exequiel came up with a finishing kick that was just enough to hold off a charging field and claim the Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. Cup.

Don Exequiel, who stalked the pacesetting and betting favorite Million Dollar early, finished by half a length ahead of Special Edition, who in turn nosed out Jet Sutter. Tigres In Action was less than a length behind Jet Sutter for fourth. Batong Silyar settled for fifth.

The win, worth P1.2 million, was the biggest for the Bench Mark out of Belle Epoque progeny, and it clearly established Don Exequiel as the horse to beat for the remainder of the series.

"He (Don Exequiel) ran a gallant race," said owner Hermie Esguerra, who named the horse after his late father. "Rarely do you find horses who run with a lot of heart."

Don Exequiel, who won the second leg of the Road to Triple Crown series in the same come-from-behind manner last month, turned in quarter clockings of 24', 23', 25, 28 for a 1-minute-41 second clocking over the mile.

A natural stayer, the chestnut Don Exequiel was wheeled into the fight by Baldonido early as Million Dollar, the only speedball in the field, set a comfortable pace up until the mid-backstretch.

Baldonido found room when the field hit the last bend and, after dispatching Batong Silyar and Million Dollar, Don Exequiel held on with Special Edition charging from the outside.

The race was wide open that Million Dollar, the favorite, was only able to corner P253,159 out of the total pool of P866,326. Don Exequiel sold P88,993.

SPORTSWATCH

NCA int'l cockfest today

THE HEAVYWEIGHTS OF PHILIPPINE COCKFIGHTing collide starting today with rivals from the United States, Canada, Japan and Malaysia in the NCA International 8-Cock Derby at the Roligon Mega Cockpit in Parañaque City. The first of more than 75 world-caliber fights starts at 4 p.m. The three-day cockfest (May 29, 31 and June 2) is hosted by Rep. Iggy Arroyo, Gov. Ito Ynares, the Sundance Group, JV Magsaysay, Ric de Guzman, Rene Medina and Firefly Group. Meanwhile, today is the submission of entries in tomorrow's Kayang-Kaya 5-Cock Derby. For inquiries, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 852-9812.

Anniversary derby June 7

THE WTJ SPORTS AND AMUSEMENT CORP., OPERator of cockfighting and other sports events at Makati Coliseum, will present the First Anniversary 5-Cock Derby on June 7. To be sponsored by B-Meg Derby Ace, the derby dangles a guaranteed prize of P1 million. Entry fee is P25,000. The WTJ promoters Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co expect no less than 100 fights for the derby. Meanwhile, partners Lito Alcantara and Boy Valenzuela will host a 3-cock derby this Saturday at the same venue with P200,000 in guaranteed prizes at stake. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

Arnismaster 6-cocker set

WELL-KNOWN HOTELIER AND GAMEFOWL BREEDer Biboy Enriquez joins forces with equally prominent cocker and sportsman Raymond Velayo in the staging of the Firebird-Arnismaster 6-Cock Derby at the Araneta Coliseum tomorrow and on Thursday. The hosts will present more than 60 entries composed of the league's finest pit masters fielding their signature lines of gamecocks. This two-day tussle will serve as a prelude to the forthcoming World Slasher Cup and is expected to be a tune-up fight for most of those seeing action in the WSC. Submission of weights is set from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. today and on May 31. The 43rd edition of the WSC is set on June 13, 15 and 17.

Wade waxes hot, again

Heat take 2-1 lead

MIAMI—DWAYNE WADE SCORED 35 POINTS AND FUELED A game-ending run as Miami beat Detroit 98-83 Saturday to take the lead in the National Basketball Association Eastern Conference finals.

Shaquille O'Neal collected 27 points and 12 rebounds for the Heat, who took a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series and are halfway to avenging a seven-game loss to Detroit in last year's conference finals.

The Heat can put the Pistons on the brink of elimination Monday, when they host Game 4.

Meanwhile, the Phoenix Suns play the Dallas Mavericks at home in Game 3 of their own series Sunday.

The Pistons never led after the first three minutes of the contest but opened the fourth quarter with an 11-0 run to close within 74-73 on back-to-back three-pointers by Chauncey Billups with 7:45 left.

Miami coach Pat Riley called a timeout and his two superstars promptly delivered consecutive baskets to restore order.

Wade drove to the rim and converted a difficult three-point play to begin the 24-10 burst and O'Neal added a hook shot in the lane for a 79-73 lead.

"They put the ball in my hands and trust me to make the right play," said Wade. "My teammates depend on me. Guys look at me and say, 'It's your time.' That's all you need."

Richard Hamilton made four free throws to bring Detroit within 85-79, but Wade answered with two foul shots and Antoine Walker fed Udonis Haslem for a jumper to restore a 10-point lead. *AFP*

MIAMI'S Shaquille O'Neal stuffs it in over Dale Davis of Detroit. AFP

Coca-Cola Tigers gain q'finals, thwart Air21

By June Navarro

COCA-COLA REFUSED TO BE RATTLED BY Air21's stingy full-court trap to secure a convincing 87-73 win and a quarterfinal berth in the Gran Matador-PBA Philippine Cup last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Ali Peek powered his way to 20 points while Gerard Francisco and Billy Mamaril contributed key minutes to lead the Tigers to the quarterfinals for the first time after finishing dead-last the past two conferences.

"Everybody gave everything they had to compensate for our matchup problems," said Coca-Cola coach Binky Favis, whose Tigers will face the fourth-seeded Alaska Aces in a best-of-five quarterfinal series after the wildcard phase.

Will Antonio was supposed to put a body on the flashy Nino Canaleta but rode the bench throughout because of a sprained left ankle. Francisco gladly picked up the cudgels for the ailing Antonio.

Mamaril's timely incursions, highlighted by a three-point play off Yancy De Ocampo, restored the momentum back to the Tigers, who saw a 15-point lead razed to 54-53 in the third.

But Peek clustered five points in the opening minutes of the fourth to pad the Coca-Cola cushion to 72-57, before Francisco drilled in a couple of long-range bombs to settle the issue.

The scores:

COCA-COLA 87—Peek 20, Reavis 12, Wainwright 11, Francisco 9, Miranda 8, Arigo 8, Mamaril 6, Abarrientos 6, Singson 5, Capati 2.

AIR21 73—Canaleta 15, Padilla 13, Arboleda 13, De Ocampo R. 10, De Ocampo 10, Avenido 8, Telan 4, Dacia 0, Bernardo 0, Se 0.

Quarters: 21-27, 48-38, 67-57, 87-73

Federer starts Paris challenge

PARIS—TOP SEED ROGER FEDERER STARTS his French Open quest on Sunday with a first round match against qualifier Diego Hartfield of Argentina.

The Swiss was supposed to play Frenchman Arnaud Clement but the world No. 56 pulled out on Friday with a groin injury.

Federer is aiming to become only the sixth man to win all four grand slams at least once.

The world No. 1 is followed on to center court by his female counterpart, Amelie Mauresmo, who plays American Meghann Shaughnessy.

Fourth-seeded Russian Maria Sharapova, who arrived in Paris very short of match practice, faces another American in Mashona Washington.

Hamburg Masters Series winner Tommy Robredo takes on Czech Tomas Zib and third seed David Nalbandian faces Stanislas Wawrinka. *AP*

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Gorres outclasses Colombian rival

TALENTED FILIPINO Z "THE DREAM" GORRES, fighting for the second time under Oscar De la Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions, mauled Colombian Pedro Rincon Miranda yesterday in their 10-round fight at the Home Depot Center in Carson City, California. The bout was in the undercard of the WBO bantamweight duel between title-holder Jhonny Gonzalez and challenger Fernando Montiel. Gonzalez won by split decision. Gorres (24-1-1, 12 KOs), holder of the OPBF super flyweight title, dominated Miranda (31-11-2, 25 KOs), knocking down the Colombian in rounds one, five and 10. All three judges scored it 100-87 for Gorres, who solidified his position as the WBO's No. 1 junior bantam. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

Dutch battlecry lives on

REUTERS

STRIKER Ruud van Nistelrooy is the Dutch's main weapon.

AMSTERDAM—THE NETHERLANDS WILL head to the World Cup next month with a simple mantra hammered into them by their expectant fans: "Don't lose to Germany."

Half a century after the end of World War II and the German occupation, lingering Dutch resentment of their giant neighbour to the east often bubbles to the surface when the two countries meet on a football field.

And Dutch fans are already contemplating the possibility of an explosive quarterfinal meeting against the hosts in Berlin on June 30.

"You just don't want to lose to Germans. The worst-case scenario is that Germany wins this World Cup," football fan Joris Rotmans said.

Whether its bitterness over World War II or the enduring heartache of Holland's defeat in the 1974 World Cup final, playing Germany makes the Dutch behave quite strangely.

Former Dutch international Ronald Koeman admitted using a German player's shirt as toilet paper in 1988. Two years later, soft-spoken Frank Rijkaard, now the coach of Barcelona, spat at German striker Rudi Voeller.

For this World Cup, Dutch fans can don bright orange replicas of the German World War II army helmet and wipe their feet on the German flag courtesy of a special doormat. *AFP*

Pole-sitter Schumacher sent to back of the grid

MONTE CARLO, MONACO—MICHAEL Schumacher was stripped of pole position at the Monaco Grand Prix after stewards ruled he deliberately stopped his car on the circuit during Saturday's qualifying.

The seven-time world champion will start from the back of the grid in Sunday's race, while Fernando Alonso will start from pole with Mark Webber of Williams moving up to second.

After setting the fastest lap of 1 minute, 13.898 seconds early in the final section of qualifying, Schumacher appeared to lose control of his Ferrari on his final lap and stalled out on the track on the final turn.

Others, including defending world champion Alonso, were behind him trying to set a fastest lap.

Alonso had looked like he was about to do it, but had to slow down and avoid Schumacher's car.

While Schumacher was still waving to the crowd cheering him for getting pole position, the stewards announced they had launched an investigation into the incident. Schumacher was called in to explain his actions.

"(There was) no justifiable reason (to stop) with such undue excessive and unusual pressure at this part of the circuit…" the stewards ruling said.

Almost eight hours after the session ended and after viewing evidence and comparing data, the stewards ruled that it was a driving infringement and deleted all his times from the qualifying.

Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Monday, May 29, 2006
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Iba Tayo!
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5				National Geographic	V League				Sentro	How Clean Is Your House	ABC Action Movies				Big News	Fear Factor		Totoo TV	
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Bituing Walang Ningning	Sa Piling Mo	Pinoy Big Brother	Panday	Wonderful Life	OK Fine! Whatever			Insider
AXN		The Karate Kid					E Buzz	Beastmaster (Season I)		Pensacola (Season III)		Sports Disaster IV		Numb3rs (Season 2)		Lost (Season II)		House	
Cartoon Network	Police Academy	Richie Rich	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Codename Kids Next Door	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Simpsons		Power Rangers Ninja Storm	PokeMon	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel		The Simpsons		Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One		Tisoy				Magkano Ang Iyong Dangal?				Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure				Esperanza The Movie				Working Girls 2	
Cinemax	Barefoot in the Park (2:45 PM)				Beyond Betrayal (4:40 PM)				Sweet Poison (6:20 PM)			Eternal Sunshine Of Spotless Mind			Dead On Relentless II			Locusts (11:15PM)	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	Art Of Life	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		What Should You Do?		Law & Order Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	Mastermind	Law & Order		Law & Order: Special Victims Unit		Crossing Jordan		Bones		Cold Case	
Discovery Channel		Ten Ways		Discovery Enzone		Anatomical Travelogues		I Shouldn't Be Alive		Wild Discovery		Colour Of War III		Hyperspace With Sam Neil		I Shouldn't Be Alive		The FBI Files	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Unitalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Zenon The Zequel			Black Hole High	So Little Time	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Zenon, Girl Of The 21st Century	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '04 Trick Shot Magic NY, USA		Pool/ Snooker World Pool Masters '05 UK		X-Games Files '02	X-Games Files '04	Watersports Programming Hot Water		Atlantic Coast Conf. Basketball Georgia Tech Vs N. Carolina				Sportscenter Asia	LPGA Golf LPGA Corning Classic, NY USA 4th Round				Sportscenter Asia
ETC		America's Next Top Model 4		Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Project Runway		Queer Eye For The Straight Guy		America's Next Top Model 4		ET Weekend	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	The Biggest Loser		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
EWTN	Benediction And Devotion	Chaplet Of Mercy/ Angelus	Bible Treasure Chest	Image Of God	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	G.K. Chesterton: The Apostle Of Common Sense II	Threshold Of Hope		Sunday Night: Live [Encore] Fr. Benedict Groeschel		Daily Mass Live		Holy Land Rosary/ Angelus	Good Or Evil: Who Decides?	The Gospel Of John	Freedom & Authority	Catholic Compass	
Fox News		Beltway Boys	Fox News Watch	Bulls & Bears	Cavuto On Business	Forbes On Fox	Cashin' In	Fox & Friends						Fox News Live					
GMA 7	Agawin Mo Man Ang Lahat (2:45 PM)	Now and Forever (3:15 PM)	Endless Love 1 Autumn In My Heart By Popular Demand		Sayuki	Dragonball Z	Gokusen	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	I Luv NY	Love Of The Condor Heroes	Jewel In The Palace		Lagot Ka, Isusumbong Kita			Saksi
Hallmark Channel		Child Of Our Time (3:15 PM)		Dog Gone Love (4:15 PM)				Bewitched	The Nanny	Judging Amy		Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Judging Amy		Arthur Hailey's Detective			Judging Amy (11:45PM)
HBO	A Separate Peace (2:45 PM)			Going Ape! (4:15 PM)			Everyday People				Shaun Of The Dead (7:20 PM)			Assault On Precinct 13			American Pie The Wedding		
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Gamburager	Gosaurer	Raijin-Oh	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Gosaurer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Krusada Kontra Krimen		Japan Video Topics		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Global Family Series/ Ama	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	Jack Yard	The Late Show David Letterman		Bottomline		Afterburn		X-Men Evolution	Bust The Geeks	Mad TV		That 70s Show	Family Guy	The Late Show David Letterman		Jack In The Box			
Lifestyle Network	Get Color	30 Minute Meals	Wolfgang Puck	Sweet Dreams	Smart Solutions	Sensible Chic	Decorating Cents	Barefoot Contessa	Everyday Italian	Hot Off The Grill	E! Extra Celebrity Adventures		NY Fashion Week	Martha		Radical Sabbatical	Genuine Article	Good Finds	Style Star
MTV Philippines		Wildboyz		MTV Jammed Red Hot Chili Peppers	The 2006 MTV Asia Awards Main Show					Get Spotted	Homecoming	MTV Hits	Making the Video: RHCP Dani California	TRL		Wildboyz		Hanging Out In Boracay	Brand New
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mobile MYX		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
National Geographic	Wildlife Diary	National Geographic Specials		Naked Science: Super Volcanoes		Living Eden: Denali, Alaska's Great Wilderness		Top 5 - World Cup Crisis	Top 5 - World Cup Crisis	WOW Romance - Life & Death In The Fast Lane		About Asia		National Geographic Specials		Naked Science: Bermuda Triangle		Living Eden: Costa Rica Land of Pura Life	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports Asp.			Dyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition		Dial M		Bantay OCW With Susan K	
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Gusto Ko Nang Lumigaya				Coach				Sinasamba Kita				Karma				Babae Sa Breakwater
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zipang	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Magic Ring	Irene	Noel	Project 11	H2O Hanaha...Oyo!		News On Q	Lupa Ng Kabuhayan		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9						Global Window	RPN Aksyon News	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	Scare Tactics	NBA On RPN					Newswatch Now	Just For Laughs	Cargo For Truth	
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports					Tennis WTA Estoril Open Singles 1					Sagupaan		NBA Playoffs Western Conf. Finals Game3					Solar Sports Desk	Philippine Badminton Open Finals	
Sports Plus						French Open '06 Day2 1st rd		Golf Today											
Star Movies				Storm Catcher			The Triumph (5:35PM)			Dr. No (7:05 PM)				The Clearing			Urban Legends: Final Cut		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Ed		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids	Still Standing	Yes Dear (Series 4)	Frasier	Monk		Seinfeld	My Wife And Kids
Studio 23	Bewitched	YuGi-Oh 3 & 4				Batman Beyond	Dragon Booster	Spirits	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	The Bachelor Season 6		Charmed (8:20 PM)	Lost (9:10 PM)		News Central	Miss Match		Travel Time

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

Taiwan spikers soar

STANDINGS	W	L
China	5	0
Chinese-Taipei	4	1
Kazakhstan	2	2
Thailand	2	2
Japan	1	3
Philippines	1	3
Indonesia	0	4

GAMES TOMORROW
(*Rizal Coliseum*)
2 p.m.—Hisamitsu Seiyaku Springs (Japan) vs Garuda (Indonesia)
4 p.m.—Accel (RP) vs Tianjin Bridgestone (China)
6 p.m.—Rahat (Kazakhstan) vs Sang Som (Thailand)

By Jasmine W. Payo

CHINESE-TAIPEI'S EXPERIMENT ALMOST backfired as the Taiwanese struggled in the early going before slipping past Indonesia, 25-21, 25-17, 25-14, in the 2006 Asian Women's Club volleyball championship yesterday at the Rizal Coliseum.

"Our players' attitude and strength were not good," said coach Kuang Hung Lin, who steered the Taiwanese to a runner-up finish last year. "In today's game, we allowed everybody to play. It was not our normal strategy."

Lin Ching-i powered Chinese-Taipei to its fourth win in five games with a match-high 15 points highlighted by eight kills and six aces.

In the second match, Thailand thoroughly outplayed a surprisingly sluggish Japan squad, 25-9, 25-10, 25-23, to level its card at 2-2.

In the nightcap, defending champion China streaked to its fifth straight-set victory with a 25-15, 25-16, 25-19 decision versus Kazakhstan.

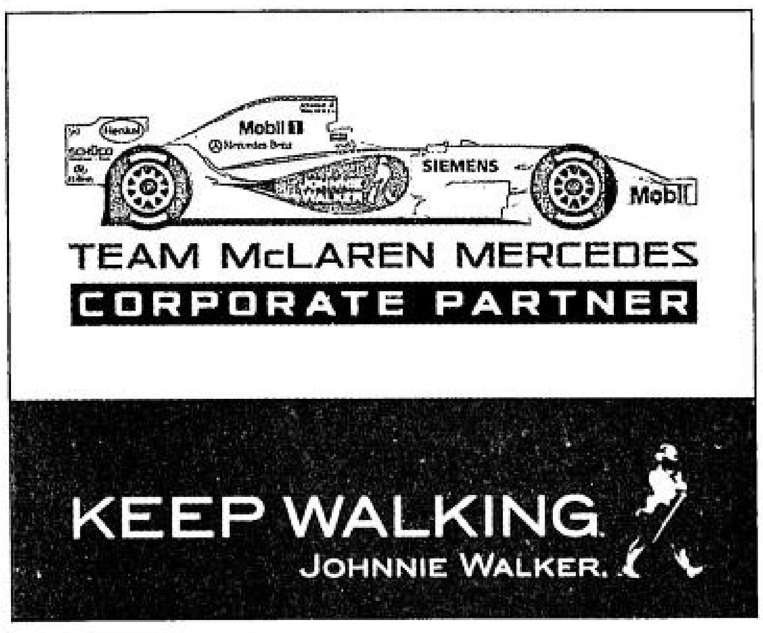
"We expect to win our last two games," said Thai coach Chanbunchee Suttichai. "We are lucky to win because Japan didn't play well."

Team captain Sangmuang Patcharee delivered 12 of Thailand's 42 kills, while Japan could only answer with a measly 19.

Chinese-Taipei returned to its dominating form by opening the third set with seven straight points, including three aces from Lin, 7-1.

Indonesia tried to remain in the game when Rahayu Ratih Pupita saved a match point, but a Lin spike closed out the match.

Indonesia saved two match points in the first set, rallying behind Wenny Evitasari to close in at 24-21 after trailing at 23-15. But an error allowed Chinese-Taipei to claim the opener.



Iloilo Warriors scuttle Laguna

ILOILO CITY—THE ILOILO WARRIORS FLEXED their muscles just hard enough to crush the visiting Laguna-Sta. Rosa Pistons, 103-71, Friday night in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the University of San Agustin gym here. It was the second most lopsided game in the conference after the 110-74 setback suffered by the Pistons at the hands of the Valencia Golden Harvest last May 20. Rhagnee Sinco of Iloilo led all scorers with 24 points. Five others scored in double figures for the Warriors, who posted only their second win in six games. Francis Sanz added 16 points, Eldrin Senierez had 15, while Ruel Balgos, Loreto Bautista and Paul Poral tallied 12 each for Iloilo. The Pistons of Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro and Mayor Joey Katindig absorbed their 10th straight loss.

Sabal halts B'navista streak at 2; Manipol also rules

CRESENCIANO Sabal crosses the finish unchallenged, winning by more than 4 minutes.

THE NEW BALANCE POWER RACE 2006 YESterday at the Bonifacio Global City saw the changing of the guard in Philippine endurance running.

Two-time Olympian Eduardo Buanavista's streak of two Power Race titles ended as reigning Milo Marathon champion Cresenciano Sabal stole the spotlight from his friend and idol.

Sabal, who hails from Sultan Kudarat just like Buenavista, pulled away four kilometers into the 25K race and never looked back. He finished in a record time of 1 hour, 21 minutes and 19 seconds.

"Buenavista just came from BMT (basic military training) and that's probably the reason why I beat him," said the 27-year-old Sabal in Filipino.

Sabal, also a member of the Philippine Army, beat Buenavista in a race for the first time.

Cristabel Martes, the 2005 Southeast Asian marathon queen, was also dethroned by SEAG 10,000 meters winner Mercedita Manipol.

The 26-year-old Manipol, who competed in the 25K race for the first time, said Martes was also probably out of shape, having gone through the same BMT training as Buenavista.

Buenavista settled for second place at 1:25:50. Placing third was veteran Bernardo Desamito, who clocked 1:26:23, in the race supported by Planet Sports, The Athletes Foot, Air New Zealand, Jam 88.3, Men's Health Magazine, Fitness First, Tokyo Tokyo, Rush, Bullfighter, Banco de Oro, Citibank, Vacation Club International, Viva Mineral Water, Powerade, Hero, Alaxan FR, and Powerbar.

Manipol closed 1:37:36, easily beating Martes, the 2005 Milo Marathon champ, who came in a 1:43:12. Jho-An Banayag of Davao was third in 1:43:35.

The Sabal brothers also made yesterday's New Balance Power Race a family affair as 24-year-old Elmer placed third in the 10K race and the 26-year-old Gerald finished second in the 5K run.

The Tolentino sisters of Cagayan de Oro also went home big winners as 19-year-old Aileen topped the 10K race and 22-year-old Ellen ruled the 5K run. Placing second and third, respectively, in the women's 5K run were Jhanna and Jesica Marle, respectively.

Capturing the men's crown in the 10K race was former marathon king Allan Ballester. Placing second was Alley Quisay.

The men's 5K run was ruled by Ben Alejandrino and placing third was Ireneo Raquin. Alejandrino and Raquin helped University of Santo Tomas take the inter-collegiate race trophy.

Placing second in the 5K intercollegiate race was La Salle led by Roy Ocon and Mark Villadar.

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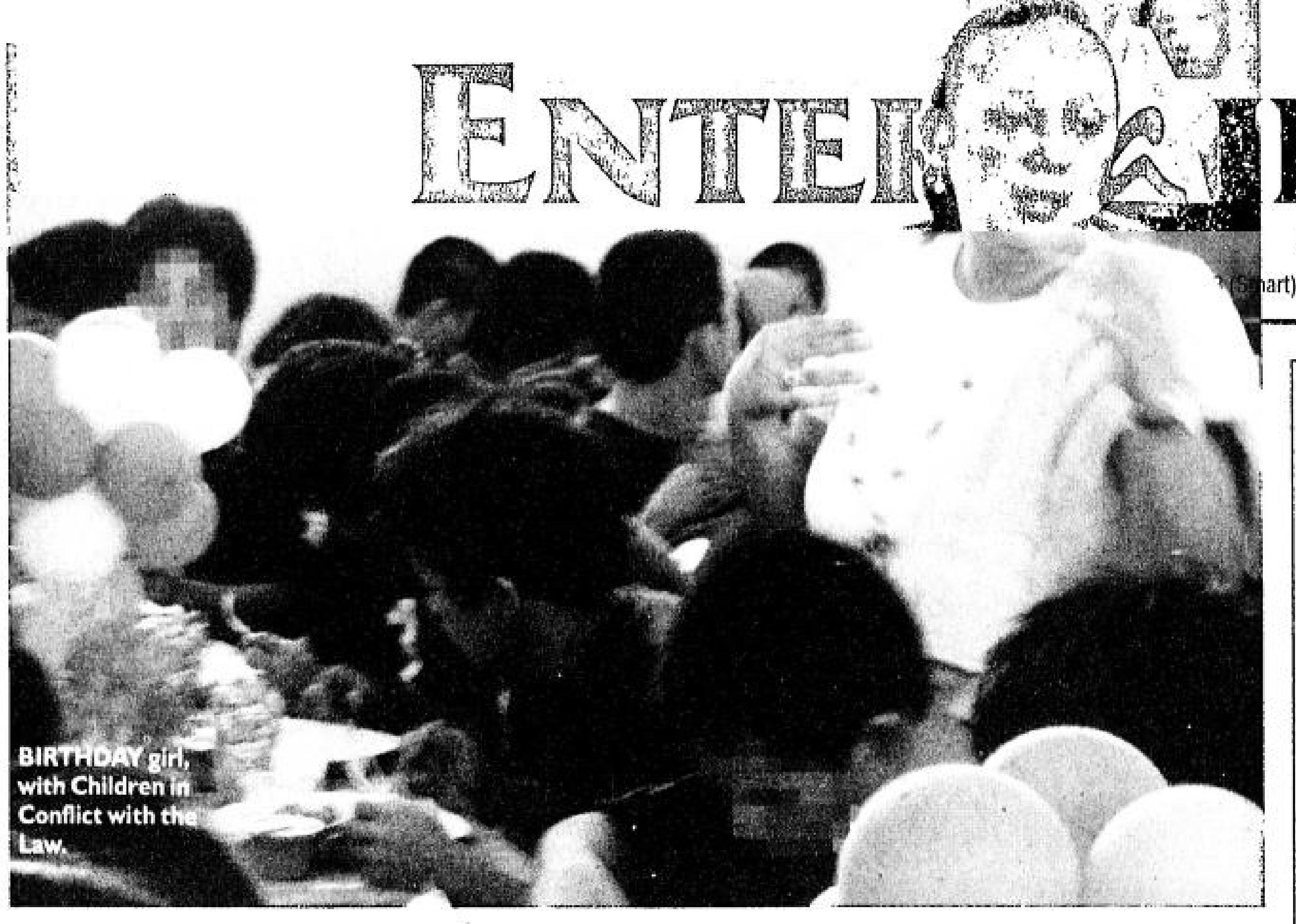
ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

art) or email us at pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph



BIRTHDAY girl, with Children in Conflict with the Law.

How Cherry Pie spent her birthday

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

I'M A FAN OF DITSI CAROLINO's," award-winning actress Cherry Pie Picache says of the acclaimed documentarian behind "Minsan Lang Sila Bata" and "Bunso."

The first movie is about child labor; the latter, about juvenile justice. Both causes that are especially close to Cherry Pie's heart.

The actress says she has always been aware of the dire conditions in local prisons where children, some only 8 years old, are thrown in with hardened criminals.

"I first heard about juvenile justice from prolife advocates—I'm against the death penalty," Cherry Pie says. "I don't even let mosquitoes bite my 4-year-old son Anton. That's why I became seriously involved with the plight of children in the penal system. I work closely with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) and the Philippine Action for Youth Offenders (Payo)."

She lauds Payo and other non-government organizations for their work that resulted in the passage last week of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, or RA 9344.

> 'I don't usually talk about my advocacy work, but this is different; I'd really like more people to take it up'

"Now these kids are no longer called criminals or youth offenders, but Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL)," Cherry Pie clarifies.

Says Rudy Diamante of Payo: "The law was championed by Sen. Francis Pangilinan. I commend Cherry Pie's efforts because she helps the public, through the media, become more aware of the problem."

"I don't usually talk about my advocacy work," Cherry Pie points out. "But I made an exception with CICL because I want more people to take it up. When I discussed this at the press conference of my latest movie 'Manay Po,' I was surprised to learn that some reporters didn't even know about this."

Cherry Pie plans to set up her own foundation, to collaborate with the 21 or so NGOs already campaigning for juvenile justice.

She celebrated her birthday on May 27 with the children in Cradle, at Camp Bagong Diwa, Bicutan, "as a jump-off point [for the foundation]." Cradle is a successful CICL center and the

HOW/ A2-3

Gary V's 'Relevance'

By Nini Valera

HOW DOES GARY VALENCIANO stay relevant 23 years after he hit the concert stage and created monster hits?

Twink Lagdameo, MTV Philippines director for talent/artist relations, credits Gary V's "creativity, dedication and passion for music."

Lagdameo explained: "It's all the things that he does, taken together, that make him unique. There's also his desire to constantly create something new, something totally different."

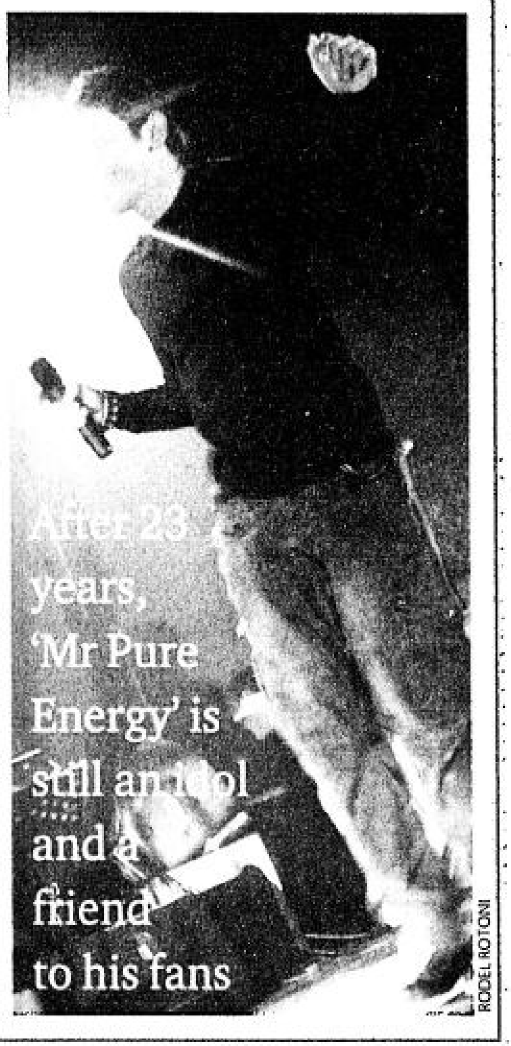
To his generation, Gary V has become an icon. To this generation's children, who are in the process of discovering him, Gary V is an awesome pop persona. To the latter group belongs Gary's son Gab, 17.

"My Dad's heart is with the youth," Gab said. "The reason he continues to be relevant is that people are like, 'I wanna do what he does, accomplish what he's done. I wanna be as great as he is.' He's a good role model—as an artist-performer as well as a person."

To the audience who watched Gary perform live on Friday at an SM theater to launch his latest album aptly titled "Relevance," the singer is as much of a friend as he is an idol.

Hours after the show ended, Gary was still signing autographs and chatting with

GARY/ A2-6



After 23 years, 'Mr Pure Energy' is still an idol and a friend to his fans

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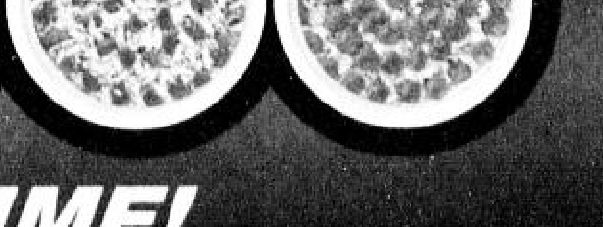

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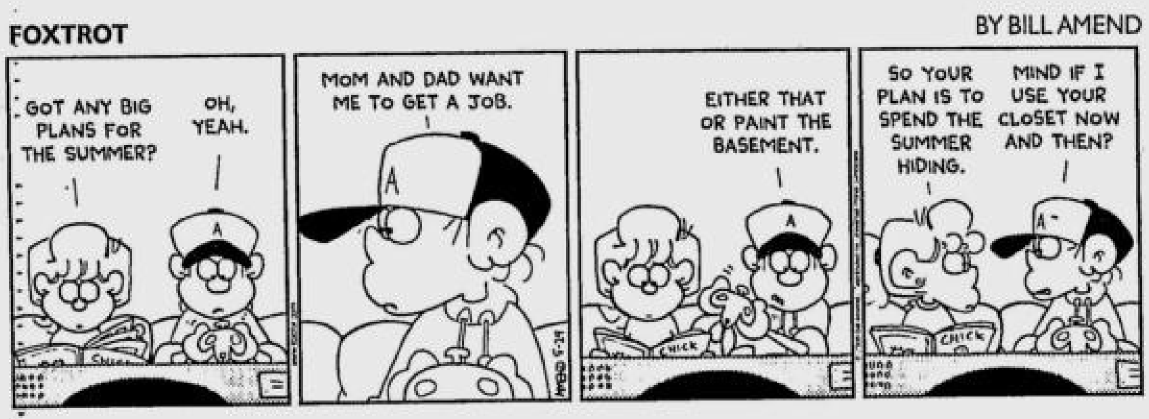
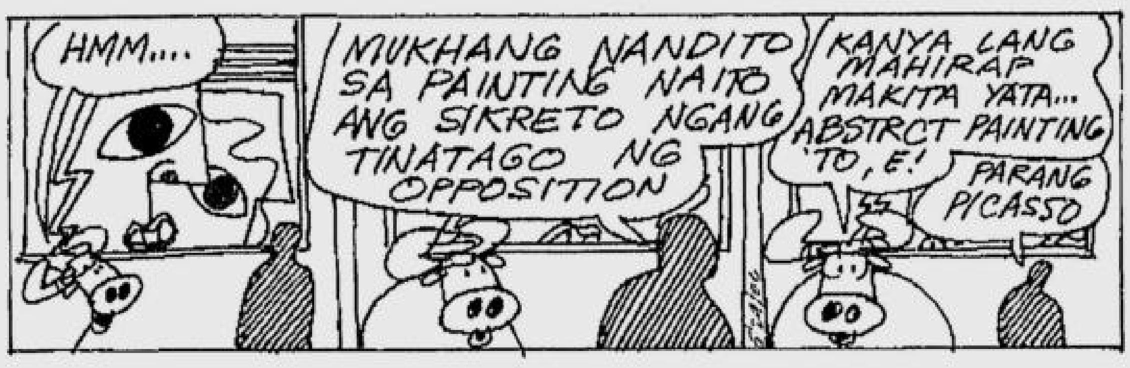
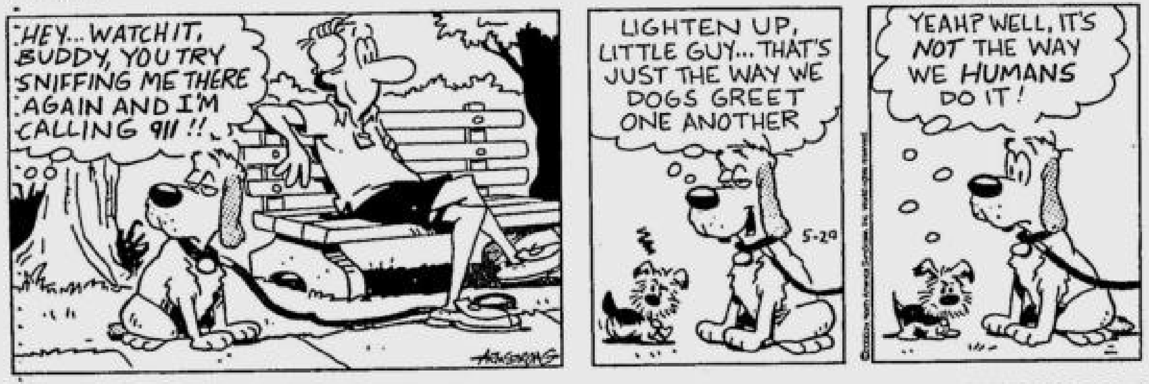

GOT ANY BIG PLANS FOR THE SUMMER?
OH, YEAH.
MOM AND DAD WANT ME TO GET A JOB.
EITHER THAT OR PAINT THE BASEMENT.
SO YOUR PLAN IS TO SPEND THE SUMMER HIDING.
MIND IF I USE YOUR CLOSET NOW AND THEN?

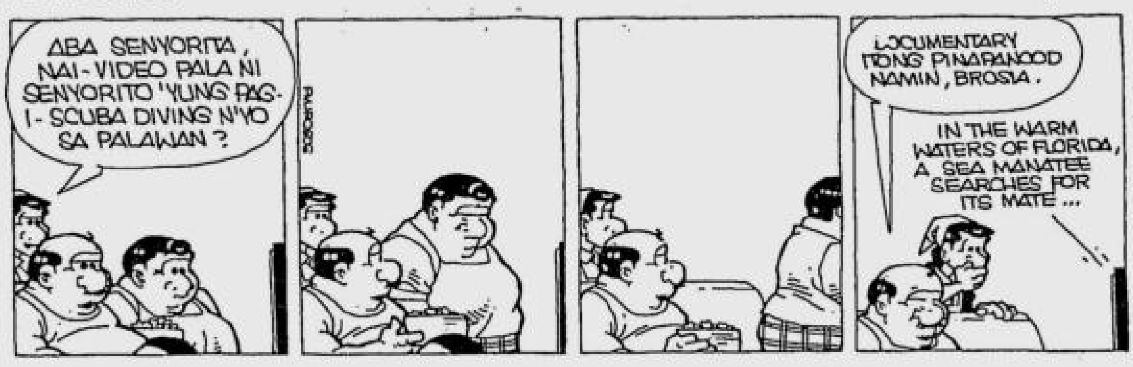
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


HMM....
MUKHANG NANDITO SA PAINTING NA'TO ANG SIKRETO NGANG TINATAGO NG OPPOSITION
KANYA LANG MAHIRAP MAKITA YATA... ABSTRCT PAINTING 'TO, E!
PARANG PICASSO

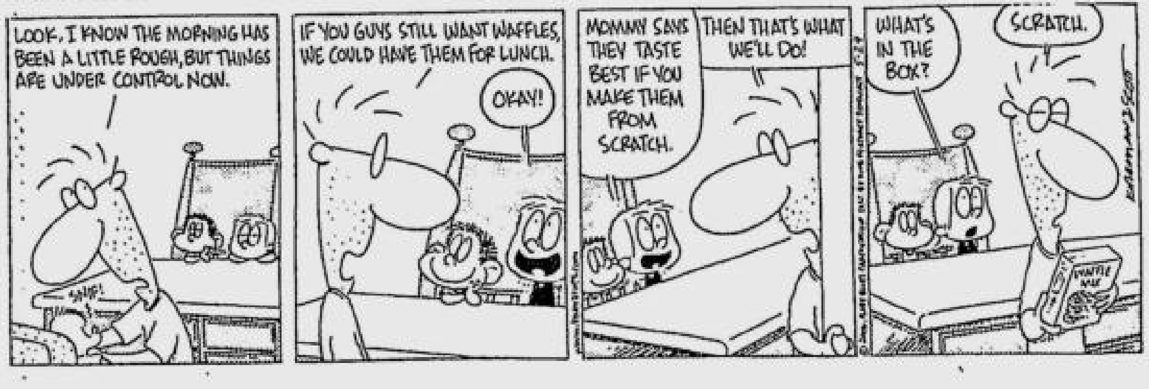
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


HEY... WATCH IT, BUDDY, YOU TRY SNIFFING ME THERE AGAIN AND I'M CALLING 911!!
LIGHTEN UP, LITTLE GUY... THAT'S JUST THE WAY WE DOGS GREET ONE ANOTHER
5-29
YEAH? WELL, IT'S NOT THE WAY WE HUMANS DO IT!

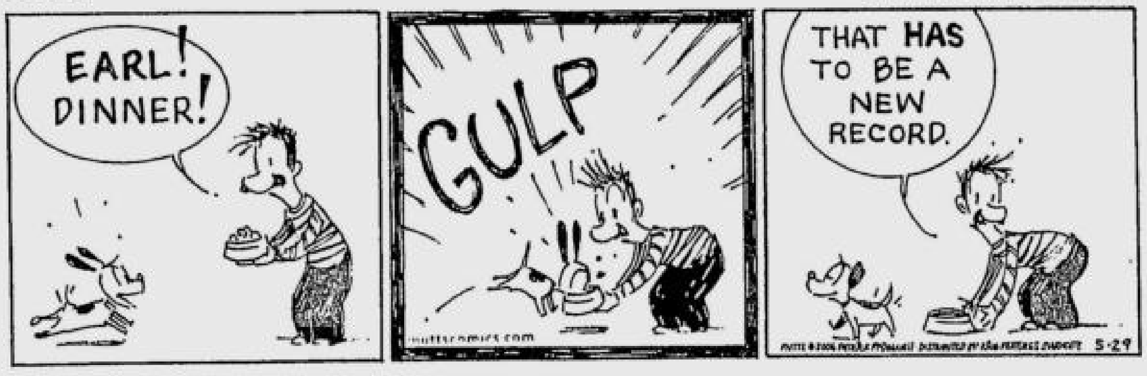
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


ABA SENYORITA, NAI-VIDEO PALA NI SENYORITO 'YUNG PAG-I-SCUBA DIVING N'YO SA PALAWAN?
DOCUMENTARY ITONG PINAPANOOD NAMIN, BROSIA.
IN THE WARM WATERS OF FLORIDA, A SEA MANATEE SEARCHES FOR ITS MATE...

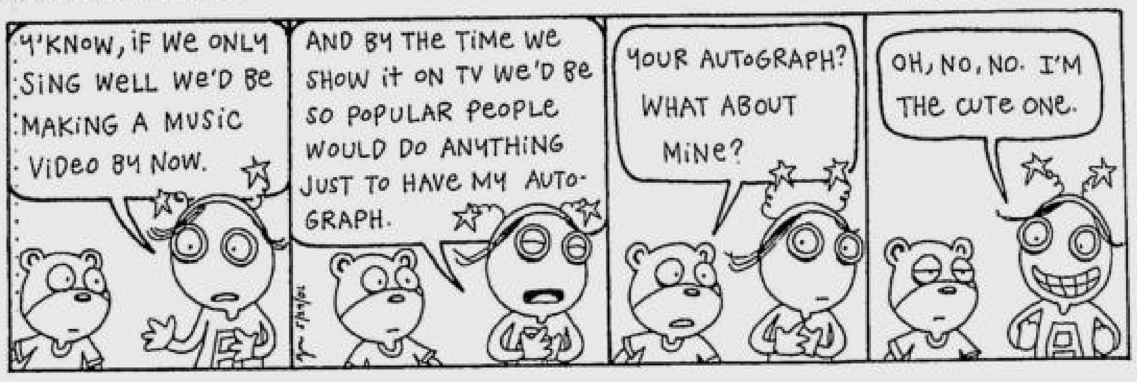
BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


LOOK, I KNOW THE MORNING HAS BEEN A LITTLE ROUGH, BUT THINGS ARE UNDER CONTROL NOW.
SNIF!
IF YOU GUYS STILL WANT WAFFLES, WE COULD HAVE THEM FOR LUNCH.
OKAY!
MOMMY SAYS THEY TASTE BEST IF YOU MAKE THEM FROM SCRATCH.
THEN THAT'S WHAT WE'LL DO!
WHAT'S IN THE BOX?
SCRATCH.

MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL

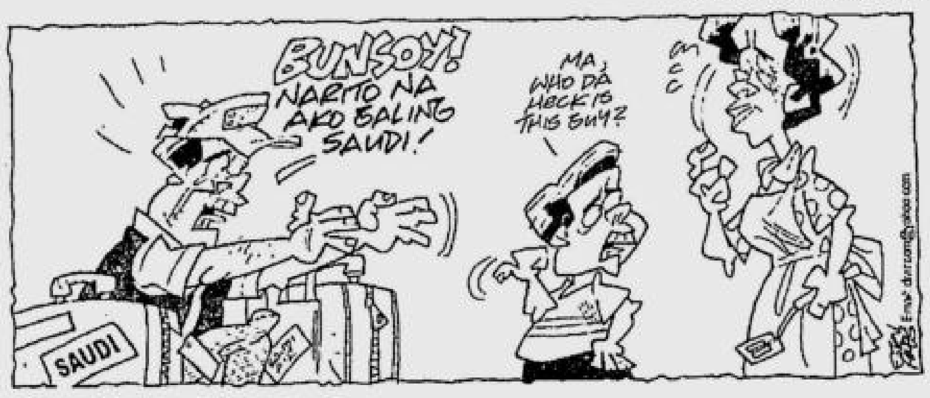

EARL! DINNER!
GULP
THAT HAS TO BE A NEW RECORD.
muttscomics.com
5-29

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

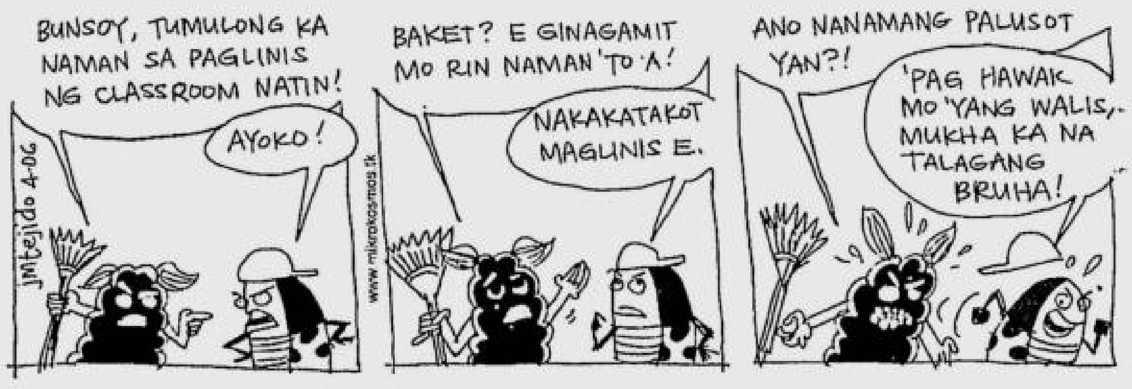

Y'KNOW, IF WE ONLY SING WELL WE'D BE MAKING A MUSIC VIDEO BY NOW.
AND BY THE TIME WE SHOW IT ON TV WE'D BE SO POPULAR PEOPLE WOULD DO ANYTHING JUST TO HAVE MY AUTOGRAPH.
YOUR AUTOGRAPH? WHAT ABOUT MINE?
OH, NO, NO. I'M THE CUTE ONE.

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS

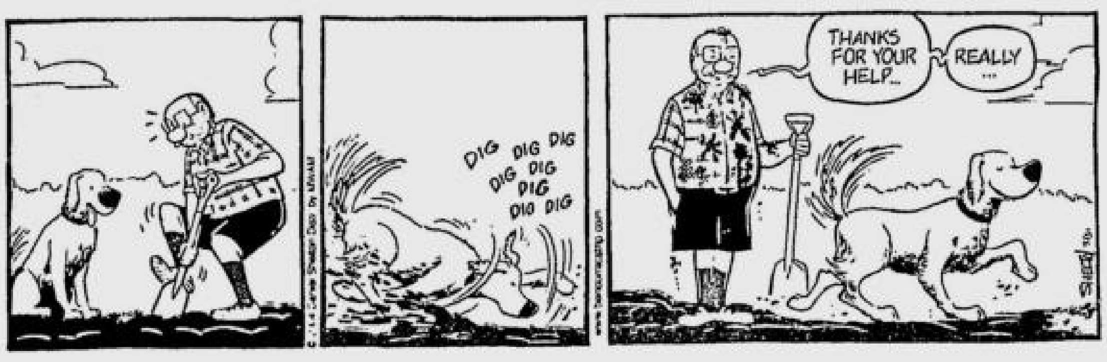
DAHIL SA HIRAP NG BUHAY NGAYON, KAILANGAN PANG UMALIS NG MGA TATAY SA IBANG BANSA PARA MAGING OCW.


BUNSOY! NARITO NA AKO GALING SAUDI!
MA, WHO DA HECK IS THIS GUY?
SAUDI

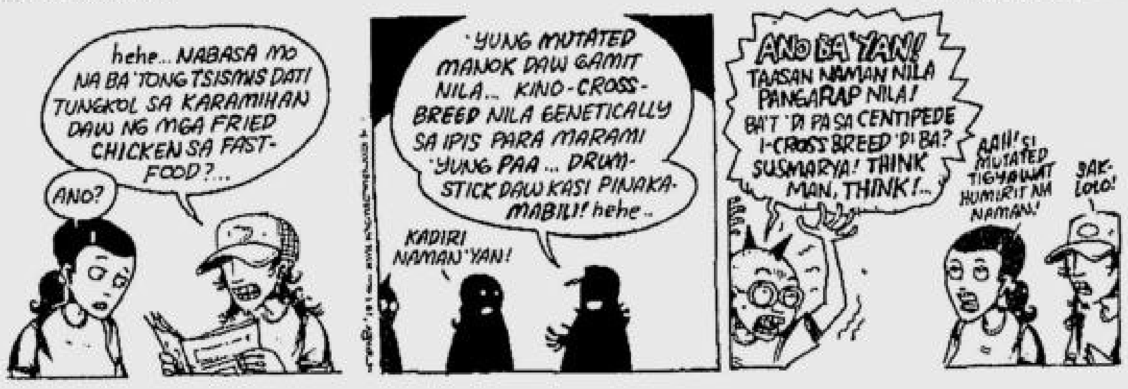
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


BUNSOY, TUMULONG KA NAMAN SA PAGLINIS NG CLASSROOM NATIN!
AYOKO!
BAKET? E GINAGAMIT MO RIN NAMAN 'TO 'A!
NAKAKATAKOT MAGLINIS E.
ANO NANAMANG PALUSOT YAN?!
'PAG HAWAK MO 'YANG WALIS, MUKHA KA NA TALAGANG BRUHA!
www.mikrokosmos.tk

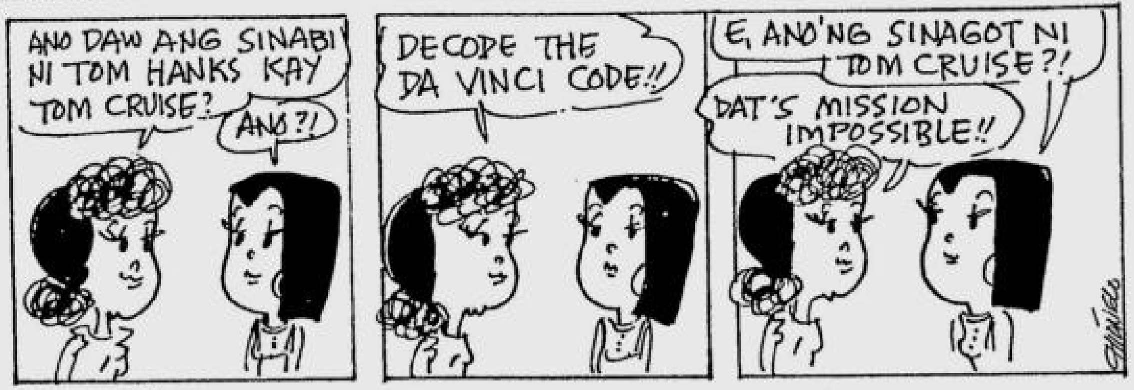
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


DIG DIG DIG DIG DIG DIG DIG DIG
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP...
REALLY ...

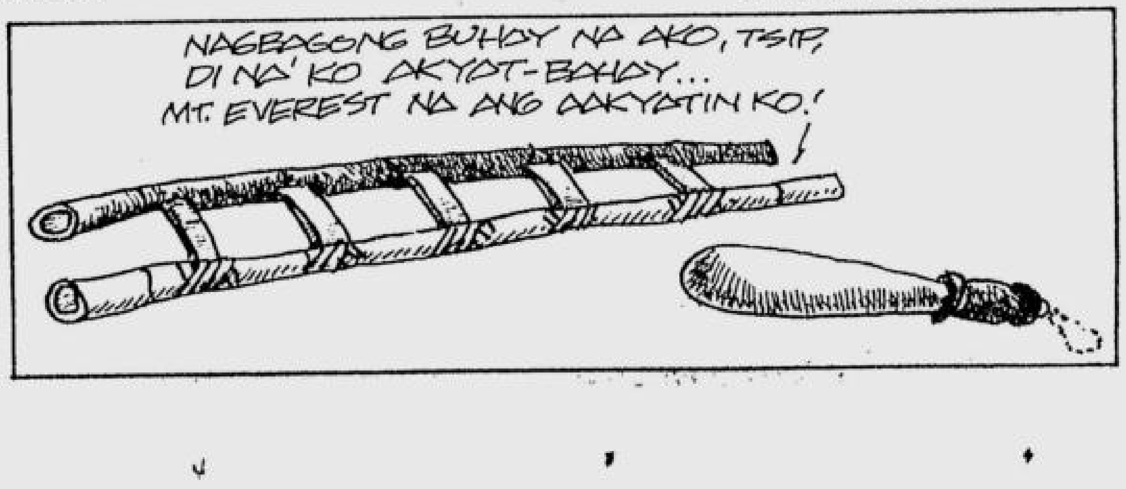
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


hehe... NABASA MO NA BA 'TONG TSISMIS DATI TUNGKOL SA KARAMIHAN DAW NG MGA FRIED CHICKEN SA FAST-FOOD?...
ANO?
'YUNG MUTATED MANOK DAW GAMIT NILA... KINO-CROSS-BREED NILA GENETICALLY SA IPIS PARA MARAMI 'YUNG PAA... DRUM-STICK DAW KASI PINAKA-MABILI! hehe..
KADIRI NAMAN 'YAN!
ANO BA YAN! TAASAN NAMAN NILA PANGARAP NILA! BA'T 'DI PA SA CENTIPEDE I-CROSS BREED 'DI BA? SUSMARYA! THINK MAN, THINK!..
AAH! SI MUTATED TIGYAWAT HUMIRIT NA NAMAN!
SAK-LOLO!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANO DAW ANG SINABI NI TOM HANKS KAY TOM CRUISE?
ANO?!
DECODE THE DA VINCI CODE!!
E, ANO'NG SINAGOT NI TOM CRUISE?!
DAT'S MISSION IMPOSSIBLE!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


NAGBAGONG BUHAY NA AKO, TSIP, DI NA'KO AKYAT-BAHAY... MT. EVEREST NA ANG AAKYATIN KO!

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're fresh and innovative, but also conservatively traditional. You want to make the world a better place. You're intelligent; you express yourself well. Whatever you do, you're not a quitter: Obstacles do not deter you. By your mid-50s, you assume the mantle of leadership, and wear it proudly. A lovely, social year awaits you. New relationships can begin now.

Birthdate of: John F. Kennedy, 35th US president; Annette Bening, actress; Melissa Etheridge, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): During the next three to four weeks, you'll enjoy shopping. You want to buy beautiful things for yourself and loved ones. Your ability to earn money can get a boost as well.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today, fair Venus moves into your sign. This makes you look and feel more attractive. All your relationships will be friendlier in the next few weeks.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Solitude in beautiful surroundings will please you in the next few weeks. Try to squeeze in some quiet time just for you. It will refresh you mentally.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Enjoy artistic, social occasions with friends and groups in the next month. The next few weeks is one of the best times for any kind of group activity with friends and colleagues.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Very favorable circumstances will arise now to help you in business and your professional life. All your dealings with bosses, VIPs and parents will improve in the next month.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your appreciation of beauty is heightened now and for the next few weeks. Visit galleries, museums, parks and art exhibits. Talk to others about philosophical and religious ideas.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Gifts and goodies can come your way during the next several weeks. You have an advantage when dealing with others. Your partner might earn a bonus. The universe wants to give you a gift!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Today, Venus moves opposite your sign, where it will stay for the next three to four weeks. This greatly improves all your relationships, especially with partners and close friends.

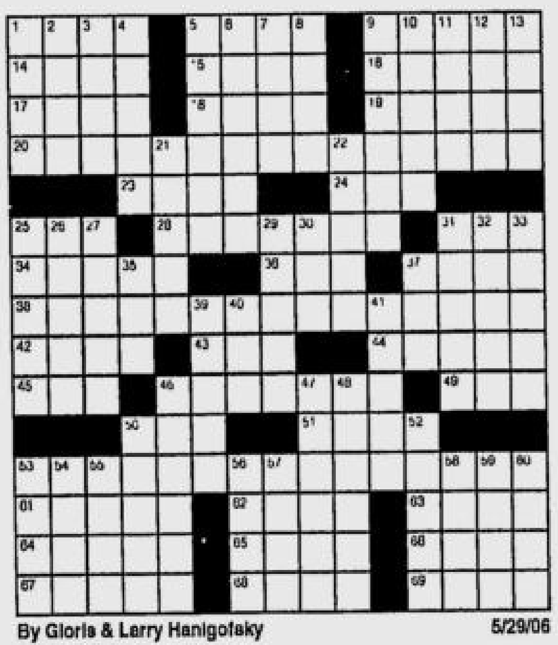
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Your relationships with co-workers will improve in the next month. This is an excellent time to resolve any difficulties you might have with someone.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Creative activities and involvement with the arts will give you much pleasure in the next few weeks. Romantic opportunities also abound! New love could come into your life. (Woo, woo.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Do whatever you can to make where you live look more attractive in the next few weeks. You might want to buy something beautiful for your home.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your communication with others will improve in the immediate future. This is a good time for negotiations and for creating partnerships.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Gloria & Larry Hanigofsky
Akron, OH
5/29/06

ACROSS

1 Padlock's partner
5 See fit
9 Actress Davis
14 Vocalist Fitzgerald
15 Glamour rival
16 Pilgrim John
17 Overly stern
18 Tool for holding
19 Went ballistic
20 Overlapping ballplayer and matriarch
23 Plaster backing strip
24 Primary color
25 Female swine
28 Serving trolley
31 Impudent talk
34 Grand or upright, e.g.
36 Undivided
37 Cork's country
38 Overlapping singers
42 Butterfly catchers
43 Time period
44 Checks for horses
45 Lic. to pull teeth
46 Port on the Bristol Channel
49 Ruby of "Raisin in the Sun"
50 Toulon summer
51 New York City river
53 Overlapping singer and golfer
61 Character in "The Tempest"
62 Abbr. on an envelope
63 Winter drift
64 Washer setting
65 Trap in an oak, maybe
66 Major ending?
67 Chairs
68 Tarot reader
69 Shoe points

DOWN

1 Rope fiber
2 Out of the wind
3 Louver
4 Judging committee
5 Consecrate
6 Hebrew prophet
7 Different
8 Submissive
9 Dark red gem
10 Large antelope
11 Border
12 Have to have
13 Artist Warhol
21 Boca __, FL
22 Did wrong
25 Exhaust
26 Lubricated
27 Electrical units
29 "Over There" composer
30 Lee or Landers
31 Furiously angry
32 Goodnight girl of song
33 Intrinsically
35 Turndowns
37 Compass dir.
39 "The __ in the Crown"
40 __ pro nobis
41 Take out lines?
46 Distinctive mannerisms
47 Drawing-room couch
48 Moneymaker
50 Excrete
52 Remote receiver
53 Links norms
54 HOMES part
55 Lollobrigida of "Trapeze"
56 Consumes
57 To be in Toulon
58 Division word
59 Post-it jotting
60 Has debts

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

T	E	G	U	C	I	G	A	L	P	A	■	C	A	R
A	N	I	M	O	S	I	T	I	E	S	■	O	R	E
C	A	N	I	N	E	T	E	E	T	H	■	M	I	A
■	■	■	A	C	F	■	■	■	S	L	I	M	E	S
S	P	A	K	E	■	B	E	G	■	A	N	I	L	S
E	R	S	■	P	L	A	T	E	■	R	U	S	S	E
P	O	S	■	T	O	R	O	S	E	■	S	E	H	R
A	M	I	L	■	S	N	I	T	S	■	E	R	A	T
R	I	M	A	■	S	A	L	A	A	M	■	A	R	I
A	N	I	S	E	■	R	E	L	I	C	■	T	O	O
T	E	L	E	X	■	D	S	T	■	G	L	E	N	N
I	N	A	R	U	T	■	■	■	T	A	E	■	■	■
O	C	T	■	D	I	S	P	R	O	V	A	B	L	E
N	E	O	■	E	L	E	C	T	R	I	C	E	E	L
S	S	R	■	S	T	E	T	S	O	N	H	A	T	S

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FEEDBACK

Take a break

From Loi Reyes Landicho (www.professionalheckler.blogcity.com), Makati City:

GMA 7'S "Pinoy Pop Superstar" should take a break, reassesses its format and concentrate on discovering versatile talents—with star quality —who can actually perform.

[Previous winners] can sing, yes. But performers, they're not.

From Paolo Manuel Fule, Azucena St., San Pablo City:

To Billy John Punzalan: Gerald Santos is the best singing champ to emerge since Sarah Geronimo and Kyla. The jurors know better than you.

How Cherry Pie spent her birthday

From page A2-1

actress knows it well. "The facility was opened last Feb. 15. About 261 children, ages 12 to 17 and from different jails in Metro Manila, were brought here. It's good that Cradle's warden, Superintendent Amelia Talento, is a social worker by profession."

INQUIRER Entertainment accompanied Cherry Pie. At Cradle, she was joined by friends, relatives, Payo members, her manager Ed Instrella, fellow actors Jaclyn Jose and Gardo Versoza and TV director Andoy Ranay.

She couldn't have pulled it off without her friends, the birthday girl says.

"The food was provided by caterer Nomie Cruz, a cooking diva [finalist] on 'Makuha Ka sa Tikim' (the ABS-CBN cooking show she co-hosts). Unilever, a show sponsor, along with Arce Dairy, Hi-Top Supermarket and Mother Lily [Monteverde, 'Manay Po' producer] also helped," Cherry Pie adds.

There's still a lot of work to be done, Cherry Pie and Rudy insist. "The kids constantly need bath soaps, toothpaste, shampoo and slippers. Five TV sets wouldn't hurt, either," she says. "Even old sets will do."

Her work with Payo is a chance "to share the blessings [I have been receiving]," according to Cherry Pie.

Apart from "Manay Po" and "Kaleldo," which are both in the can, she is also shuttling between the sets of the family drama "I Wanna Be Happy," under Seiko, and the horror flick "Huwag Kang Lilingon," under Star Cinema.

Her birthday wish: "That people will not ignore these kids. They need our help. They are our responsibility. It's up to the community to take charge if no one else will."

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GALLERIA 632-9115

1 X-MEN 3 • THX
12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30

2 X-MEN 3
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

3 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00

4 THE DA VINCI CODE
12:00 3:10 6:20 9:30

5 X-MEN 3
11:40 2:00 4:20 6:40 9:00

6 THE DA VINCI CODE
12.30 3:40 6:50 10:00

7 POSEIDON
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

8 OVER THE HEDGE
11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

9 THE DA VINCI CODE
12:15 3:25 6:35 9:45

10 THE DA VINCI CODE
11:45 2:55 6:05 9:15

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 X-MEN 3
10:30 12:50 3:10 5:30 7:50 10:00

2 POSEIDON
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

3 SLITHER
12:20 2:20 4:20 6:20 8:25 10:00

4 X-MEN 3
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:40 9:00

5 X-MEN 3
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:40 9:00

6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
10:50 1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50

7 OVER THE HEDGE
10:20 12:20 2:20 4:20 6:20 8:25 9:50

METRO EAST 682-8193 • 682-8199

1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
11:20 1:50 4.20 6:50 9:15

2 X-MEN 3
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30

3 POSEIDON 1:00 3:00 5:00 .
X-MEN 3 7:30

4 THE DA VINCI CODE
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

5 OVER THE HEDGE
11:50 2:10 4:30 6:50 9:10

6 X-MEN 3
1:50 4:10 6:30

7 X-MEN 3
11:30 1:50 4:10 6:30 9:00

8 THE DA VINCI CODE
11:00 2:00 5:00 8:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 POSEIDON
2 X-MEN 3
3 THE DA VINCI CODE
4 X-MEN 3
5 THE DA VINCI CODE
6 OVER THE HEDGE

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 X-MEN 3
2 THE DA VINCI CODE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 THE DA VINCI CODE
2 X-MEN 3
3 OVER THE HEDGE
4 THE DA VINCI CODE

WHOSE SIDE WILL YOU BE ON?
X-MEN
THE LAST STAND
MAY 24

now SHOWing at all
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M:I:III
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SM CITY DASMARINAS
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OVER THE HEDGE
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XMEN III
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XMEN III
M:I:III
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OVER THE HEDGE

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XMEN III
XMEN III
M:I:III
POSEIDON
OVER THE HEDGE
M:I:III

SM CITY MOLINO
OVER THE HEDGE
XMEN III
M:I:III
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SM CITY STA. ROSA
POSEIDON
M:I:III
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OVER THE HEDGE

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XMEN III

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RESERVED
AQUAMARINE

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XMEN III
REINCARNATION
OVER THE HEDGE
M:I:III
POSEIDON
XMEN III

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XMEN III

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Tulfo brothers too fierce for th

MON: "I'm terrified of heights. I can't look down from a tall building." PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

'We just need to show dishonest people that we're angry, so they realize that we'll really run after them'

By Marinel R. Cruz

OTHER NETWORKS refused to air our show. They said we're too forceful, too fierce for our own good," said controversial journalist Mon Tulfo.

TAKE FIVE

Mon is the host of "Isumbong Mo! (Tulfo Brothers)," the RPN 9 public service program that premiered on May 20. He shares hosting chores with his equally hard-hitting younger siblings Raffy and Erwin.

"If we change our style according to how those networks want it, we won't be as effective," Mon told a group of entertainment writers in a gathering last week. "I can't be of much help to our fellow Filipinos that way. *Hindi na ako si* Mon Tulfo."

Raffy added: "*Walang sinasanto ang mga* Tulfos. This is why we get death threats almost every day. That's okay. We're used to that."

According to Erwin, a TV network is always torn between profit and service when choosing public affairs programs. He explained: "If a TV channel is profit-oriented, *malabnaw ang mga palabas.* It's always hard to get advertisers to commit to a public service program. So the three of us seriously discussed it. Were we going to let advertisers dictate the kind of stories we would feature on our show?' We decided to make a stand—for public service."

In the hour-long show, Mon tackles complaints filed against government officials and men in uniform. Raffy handles community problems, such as unfair labor practices or crises in garbage collection.

"Erwin is in charge of exposés and surveillance," Mon said. "That's his specialty."

Mon talked to INQUIRER Entertainment more lengthily:

ERWIN: "If a TV st

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VIEWFINDE

Nestor U. Torre

WE'VE MADE A MENTAL NOTE to watch the new play, "Doubt," playing at the RCBC Theater from June 2 to 24.

Aside from its being a Tony and Pulitzer Prize-winner, **John Patrick Shanley**'s play is a should-see because it tackles the currently topical issue of the sins of the clergy.

More personally, we want to appreciate the performance of **Cherie Gil** as a nun who suspects a very young priest of abusing a student, and **Niccolo Manahan**'s portrayal of the priest.

Our Cherie connection goes back a long way, to when we directed her mother, **Rosemarie Gil**, in the magazine TV show, "Sanlinggo," with **Pete Roa**, **Bey Vito** and **Gigi Lacson** as co-hosts.

Rosemarie was a beautiful and gifted actress in those days, but she was new to TV hosting, so we had to boost her confidence. In so doing, we became rather close—and, with her, her entire family—hubby **Eddie Mesa**, and their children **Michael**, **Mark** and Cherie, who were just kids at the time.

That early, we saw great potential in Cherie, and knew that she would one day come into her own as an actress.

As for Niccolo, he's the good-looking and talented grandson of *the* Elvira Manahan, who was our TV colleague and best buddy for many years.

Like Cherie, we also met Niccolo as a kid at his "Wowa's"

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Feedback

FROM **Lea Umali**
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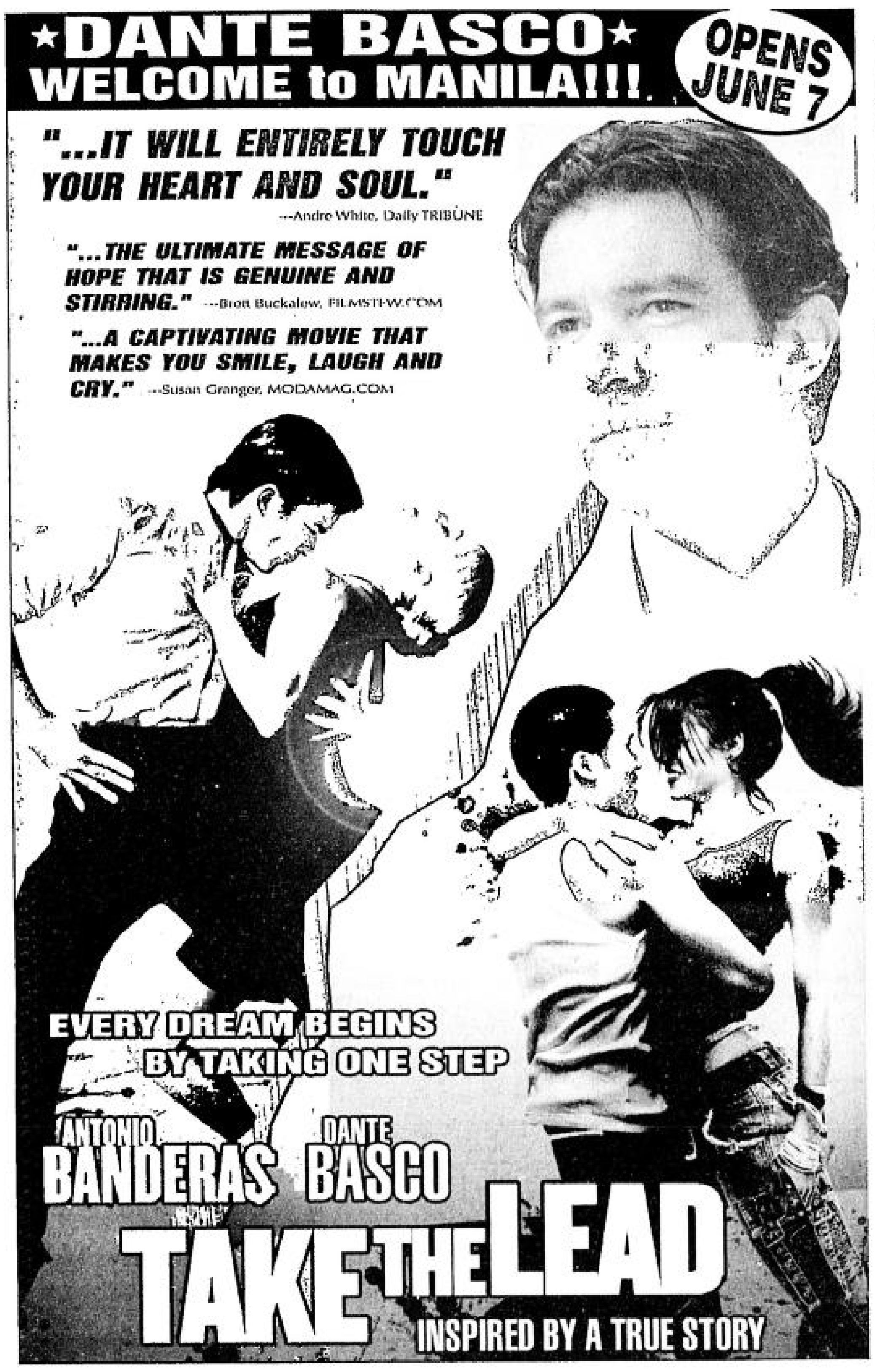
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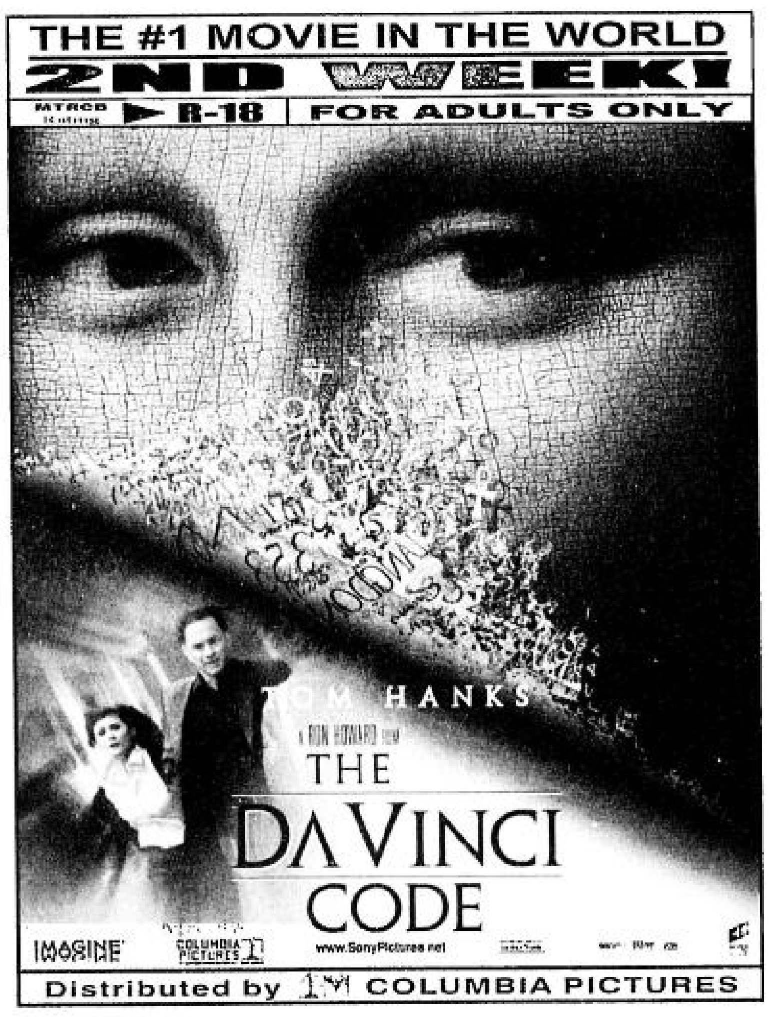
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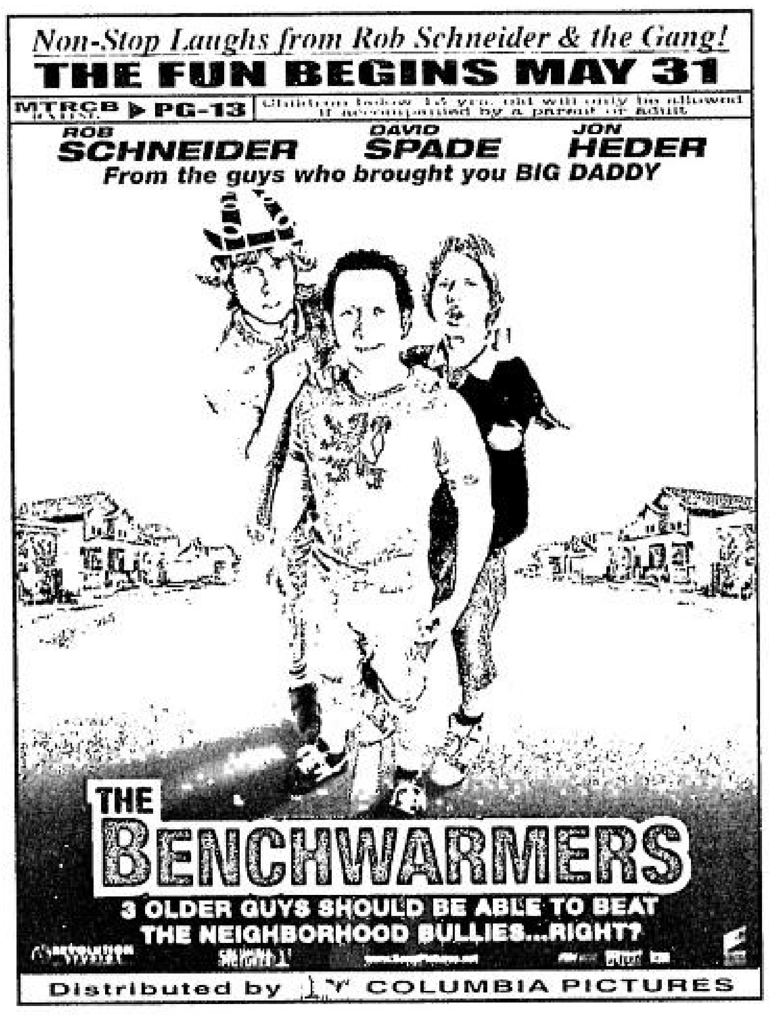
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X-MEN 3
12:05 / 12:40 / 1:15
1:50 / 2:25 / 3:00 / 3:35
4:10 / 4:45 / 5:20 / 5:55
6:30 / 7:05 / 7:40 / 8:15
8:50 / 9:25 / 10:00

THE DA VINCI CODE
12:00 / 1:00 / 2:00
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7:00 / 8:00 / 9:00 / 10:00

PLATINUM CINEMA
THE DA VINCI CODE
12:00 / 3:00 / 6:00 / 9:00

ALIMALL CINEMAS

1
X-MEN 3
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MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: 3
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POSEIDON
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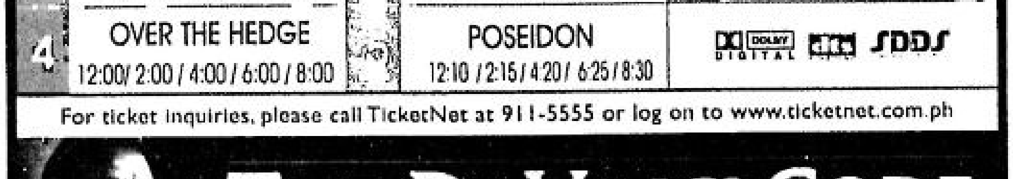
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there have been many instances when I made mistakes and had to apologize in public. That's how our show is different from other programs in the same classification. When we inadvertently wrong people, we say sorry and promise not to do it again.

What stories would never land on "Isumbong Mo!"?

We'd rather not cover land disputes, money squabbles, labor-management and domestic problems. *Ayaw din naming makialam sa* squatter problem.

Do you remember the first time you faced the camera? What was it like?

I remember that it was a show with Dong Puno and Rey Langit called "Action 9." I felt very self-conscious. I didn't know what to do. I was so conscious with my being Bisaya. *Matigas ang dila ko.*

A director friend, Marilou Diaz-Abaya, told me to just be myself. She said "*kung galit ka, ipakita mo.*"

You have nine siblings. With whom did you have the biggest fight when you were young, and over what?

I never fought with Raffy, Erwin or Ben. I sent them to school. But I remember that, back then, we were so poor that we fought for food. *Kung minsan, yung maliliit na kapatid namin ang ninanakawan namin ng saging.*

If your life were to be made into a biopic, which local actor would you choose to play yourself?

A movie outfit offered me something like that, in fact. They wanted to get Phillip Salvador. I even got paid P300,000 for that. I don't know why the project didn't push through.

RAFFY: "We get death threats every day; we're used to it."

Which do you fear most—cockroaches, spiders or rats?

Wala sa akin ang mga yan. What I'm terrified of, is heights.

I don't know why, I'm not scared of riding helicopters or airplanes but I'm scared of looking down from tall buildings, or diving into the sea. I also don't like going up the mountains. I remember one time when we did, to hunt in the woods. *Nakakita ako ng bangin.* I cried. I couldn't move.

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led by sinister Dr. Stefan Svevo. **Peter Boyle**, **Shirley Jones** and **Mark Harmon** also star.

'Echo' newscasters

IN THIS modern day and age, it's shocking to hear newscasters on local TV and radio who still report the news in the artificial, melodramatic and overloud style of the 1960s and '70s.

They speak with unction, fire and brimstone, and appear to have built-in loudspeakers and "echo machines" in their chests.

They also love to add extra syllables to the words they intone, particularly those that end in consonants. One freak-out evening, we bothered to jot down some of those "echo" words, and came up with this partial list:

Malabon-uh. Siyudad-ah. Malacañang-ah. Anak-ah. Senador-uh. Karapatan-ah. Militar-uh. Kaparusahan-ah. Pinalitan-ah. Binabalak-uh.

You get the picture.

The big question is, why don't these "echo" newscasters' bosses tell them to stop speaking in such a dated way?

Could it be that they think the listening and viewing public is impressed with this artificial style of reporting?

If so, they're terribly mistaken. Times have changed, people have grown up, and tastes have become more refined and up-to-date. So, "echo" newscasters, kindly desist—and welcome to the New Millennium!

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JENNYLYN Mercado at the opening of Finds, where she has her own clothing line. RUDY ESPERAS

SHANG CINEPLEX
① X-MEN 3
MTRCB: PG-13
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② X-MEN 3
MTRCB. PG-13
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③ THE DA VINCI CODE
MTRCB R-18
1:20, 4:25, 7:30,10:35
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12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:10
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3 THE DA VINCI CODE 12:30, 3:50, 7:15, 10:40 R-18
4 OVER THE HEDGE 11:20, 1:40, 3:50 GP | THE DA VINCI CODE 6:00, 9:30 R-18

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THE DA VINCI CODE R18 1:15,4:15,7:15,10:15
X-MEN: THE LAST STAND PG13 2:20,4:40,7:00,9:20
THE DA VINCI CODE R18 3:15,6:15,9:15
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5 GOLD (DOLBY) THE DA VINCI CODE
6 GOLD (SDDS) MISSION IMPOSSIBLE-3
7 GOLD (DOLBY) THE DA VINCI CODE
8 OVER THE HEDGE
9 POSEIDON
10 THE DA VINCI CODE

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Gary V's 'Relevance'

From page A2-1

his fans. He went as far as setting a date with some of them for merienda.

To the media, Gary has always been a good and pleasant interviewee. Hardly ever missing a beat, Gary can talk through any subject, his favorites being music and Jesus Christ.

"This album took me four years to finish," he confided. "I got delayed by so many things—touring, producing, 'ASAP' [on ABS-CBN]. For a while, I also lost my songwriting skills. I don't know why. But it did come back, so here's the album."

One of the two songs he wrote for "Relevance" is the saddest song he has ever written, according to Gary. The song is "Even for a While."

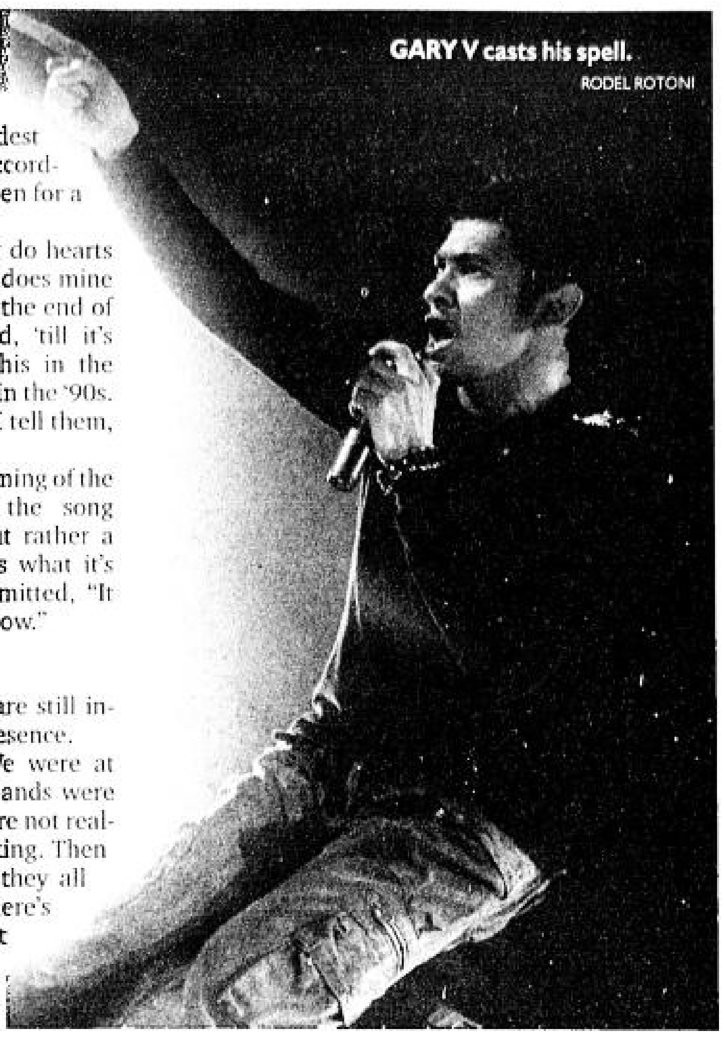
"It has words like, 'Why do hearts feel the way they do. Why does mine want to say I love you 'till the end of time, 'till I lose my mind, 'till it's over?' I started writing this in the 1980s, but finished it only in the '90s. People ask why I wrote it. I tell them, 'I don't know, I just did.'"

Though sad and unbecoming of the Gary's joyful character, the song shows not a dark side but rather a sensitive heart that knows what it's like to be broken. He admitted, "It was inspired by people I know."

A kind of hush

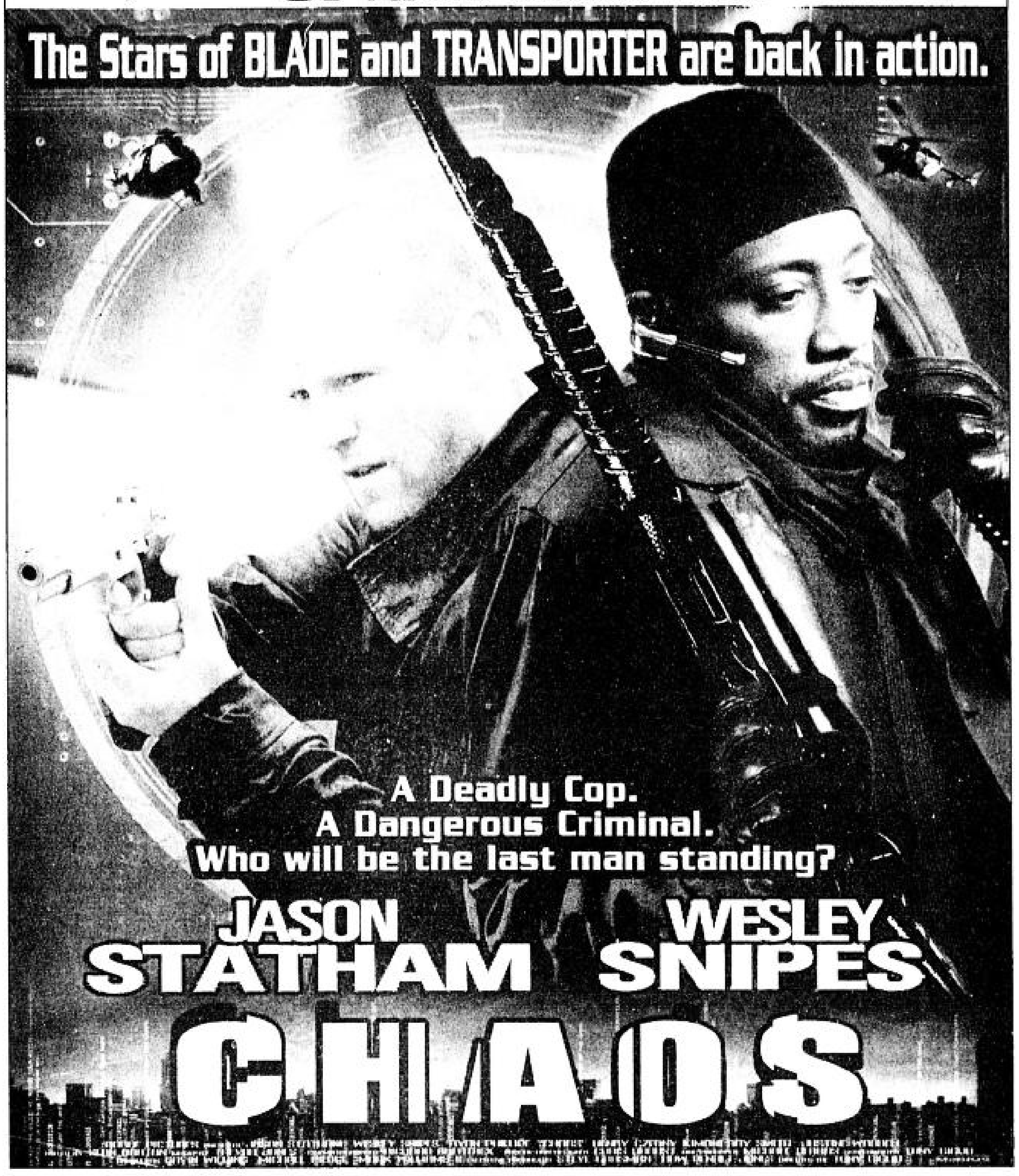
Popular young singers are still invariably awed by Gary's presence.

Lagdameo recalled: "We were at [this event] once. Some bands were performing and people were not really listening; they were talking. Then Gary came on stage and they all shut up, and then wow! There's this level of attention that Gary commands, which all other artists want to reach."



GARY V casts his spell.
RODEL ROTONI

OPENS MAY 31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G4	GLORIETTA 4	1 THE DA VINCI CODE	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	3 THX X-MEN: THE LAST STAND GUARANTEED SEATS	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	5 OVER THE HEDGE	6 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	7 THE DA VINCI CODE
GB1	GREENBELT 1	1 THE DA VINCI CODE	2 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND					
GB3	GREENBELT 3	1 THX X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 2:10, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX THE DA VINCI CODE 1:00, 3:20, 5:40, 8:00, 10:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	3 OVER THE HEDGE 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND 2:30, 5.30, 8:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC	ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA VINCI CODE	3 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	4 OVER THE HEDGE	5 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND		
ACC	AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA VINCI CODE	3 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	4 OVER THE HEDGE			
M2	MARKET! MARKET!	1 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND	2 THE DA-VINCI CODE	3 OVER THE HEDGE	4 THE DA VINCI CODE	5 X-MEN: THE LAST STAND		

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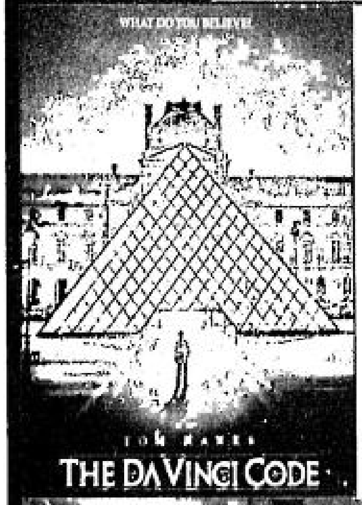
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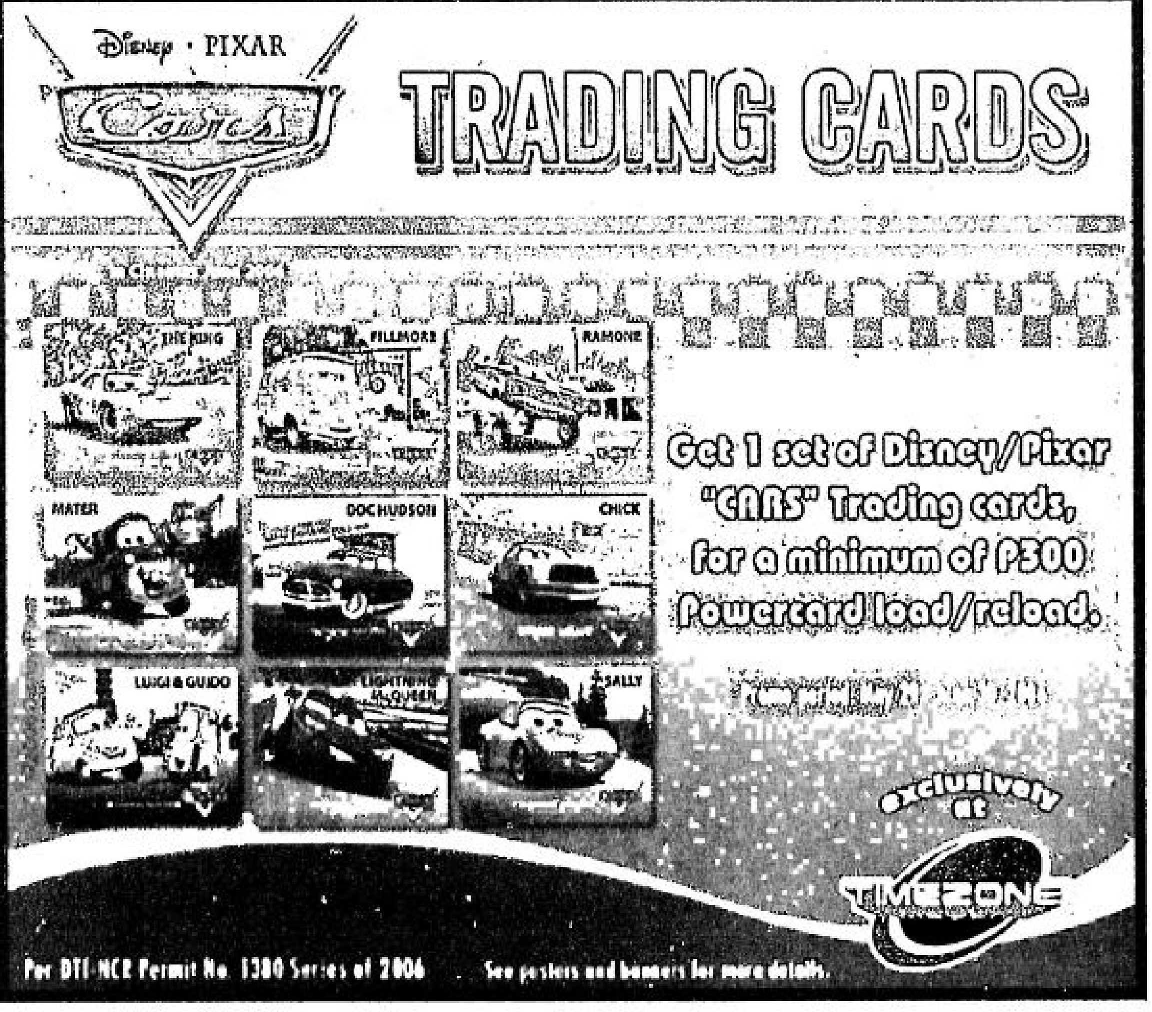
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Introducing Mrs. Bonny Serrano

Visayan singer, actress and wife of a war hero, Cora Real says music helped her survive young widowhood plus all the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by August de la Cruz
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORA REAL

UNKNOWN TO THE JEEPney drivers plying the Camp Crame-Libis route, the unassuming piano teacher that regularly avails of a senior citizen discount is Ms Bonny Serrano—also known as Visayan cinema's singing sweetheart Cora Real.

"I only pay P6," says the 70-year-old widow of a war hero. "Whenever I see the street sign [bearing my husband's name], I feel proud. I feel rich, even though I live a simple life."

Hers is wealth that money can't match, she asserts.

"A camp in Masbate is also named after him," she enthuses. "[Plus] the Philippine Navy boat PT110 Bonny Serrano, the biggest and fastest of five boats donated by the Korean government. I asked the Navy: 'Where's my boat? I heard the widow gets free rides.' The Navy told me it was in Mindanao chasing the Abu Sayyaf."

YESTERDAY

Her Bonny

Col. Bonny Serrano was the most bemedalled Filipino soldier in the Korean War, Cora says, proudly.

His exploits were the basis of the LVN movie "Korea," directed by Lamberto Avellana and penned by Sen. Benigno Aquino. It starred Jaime de la Rosa and Nida Blanca.

"His most astonishing achievement was swimming with his troop across Yalu River in winter," Cora recounts. "His troop suffered numerous losses, but with only a five-man commando, he led the capture of 77 North Korean soldiers. If not for the Filipinos, the Americans couldn't have crossed enemy lines."

He was only 22 at the time, she recalls.

"When my husband died after suffering a stroke on Jan. 2, 1970, he only had P20 to his name," she says, sadly now.

Three months after his passing, Santolan was renamed Bonny Serrano Road.

At the colonel's wake, Cora recounts, then President Ferdinand Marcos admiringly glanced at the 48 medals on Serrano's casket and asked a journalist: "Are all those his?"

"Yes, Mr. President," the writer replied, "and he earned every single one of them."

"My husband was frustrated [with the system]," Cora says. "He had been bypassed for promotions a few times because he wasn't a 'yes' man. Now, I can look anyone in the eye and proudly declare: 'I am the widow of Bonny Serrano.'"

Equally formidable

As they say, an equally formidable woman is behind a formidable man.

Cora Real was born Corazon Rifareal to Jo Rifareal and Isabel Climaco in Cebu on May 27, 1936.

"My Mama was one of the first child stars in Cebuano movies," Cora says. Her mom is also the sister of musician and film director Jose Climaco, husband of 1940s singing superstar Lilian Velez.

Bonnie darling,
With love,
Manila
"TO BONNY darling, with love."

WITH President Ferdinand Marcos at Bonny's wake in January 1970.

In fact, Cora, at age 4, made her debut in a Lilian Velez movie. "My *Tiyo* Joe just made me sit atop a table. That was my first movie, the title of which I can't remember."

At age 9, she started singing in radio shows like "Haranista" in the Queen City of the South. "I worked on dyRC, with Nick Tumulak," Cora says. "While doing radio, I attended night school at the San Carlos University."

She also topbilled concerts with boy tenor Merlo Aznar and his family. "We had shows in Davao and Iloilo. My vocal coaches were *Tiyo* Joe and Manuel Velez, the father of *Tiya* Lilian."

The radio star also worked as dubber. "We dubbed Tagalog movies in Cebuano." She was the Visayan voice for LVN, Premiere and Sampaguita stars Norma Blancaflor, Anita Linda and Carmencita Abad, among others.

She acted in 11 Cebuano movies—debuting in Teves Productions' "Dumagsa" at age 11.

"I played the best friend of Rosita Fernandez," she remembers.

A former Miss Mindanao titlist, she later became a contract star of Azucena Pictures. "My talent fee was P500 per movie."

In 1950, the Cebuano beauty crossed over to Tagalog movies—in the LVN musical "Huni sa Gugma" or "Awit ng Pag-Ibig," co-starring Priscilla Cellona, Matt Ranillo Jr. and Jess Vestil.

Baby Corazon C.
At the age of
CORA Real at age 2

SHY YOUNG actress with the glamorous Rosa Rosal

Coincidentally, Miss Mindanao's escort at the Miss Philippines pageant night was Ranillo—who later became the husband of her frequent co-star Gloria Sevilla.

Cora also acted with Gloria in Cebuano movies like "Leonora" and "Pailub Lang." Another memorable film was "Handumanan."

Cora, then 14, was on the verge of inking a contract with LVN when she met and fell in love with 32-year-old soldier Bonny Serrano—one of the country's most eligible bachelors.

She looks back: "He was wooing four other women—Miss Universe Armi Kusela of Finland, Miss Mindanao Hilda Walstrom, LVN movie queen Nida Blanca and Corazon Lazo, daughter of a general. Still, he chose me, a struggling actress."

MR. & Ms Bonny Serrano

After they tied the knot, Bonny ordered Cora to quit the movies. "He asked me to choose between marriage and career, with the warning that if I chose the latter, he'd take me back to my Mama. Imagine that… like a parcel marked 'Return to Sender!'"

For over a decade, Cora contentedly stayed in the sidelines and gave her husband three children—Audie (now, 50 years old), Bong (or Bonny Jr., 49) and Johanna (39).

Her husband treated her "like a princess," she says.

A widow at 30

Then, all of a sudden, her world came crashing down.

"I got married at 15 and was widowed at 30," she remembers. "I thought my life would end, too. I thought of slashing my wrists. I cried all the time. I was raising three children and my monthly pension [from the military] was only P658.12."

Music saved Cora from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. "I started doing shows and concerts again. I even worked as a singer in Japan for two years."

In the early 1970s, she co-starred in "Basta Bisaya," "Pobreng Alindahaw" and "Little Romeo and Juliet"—movies produced by bosom buddy Gloria Sevilla.

Later, she taught physical education (slimnastics, aerobics, ballroom dancing and dancercise), voice, as well as piano, at the YWCA… for 15 years.

For her musical gift, she is eternally grateful to grandmother Gerarda Climaco, who taught her piano, and *Tiya* Lilian, who bequeathed to her precious *piyesas* (music sheets).

Music continues to sustain her through these tough times.

"Recently, I learned that the military would soon deduct P2,700 from my monthly pension for the next 20 months," she sighs. "I was disappointed."

Fortunately, she has more pleasant things on her mind.

She is the official conductor and pianist of the Retired Officers' Wives and Widows Association. "Most of our members are in their 70s and 60s, but they've remained active because of music."

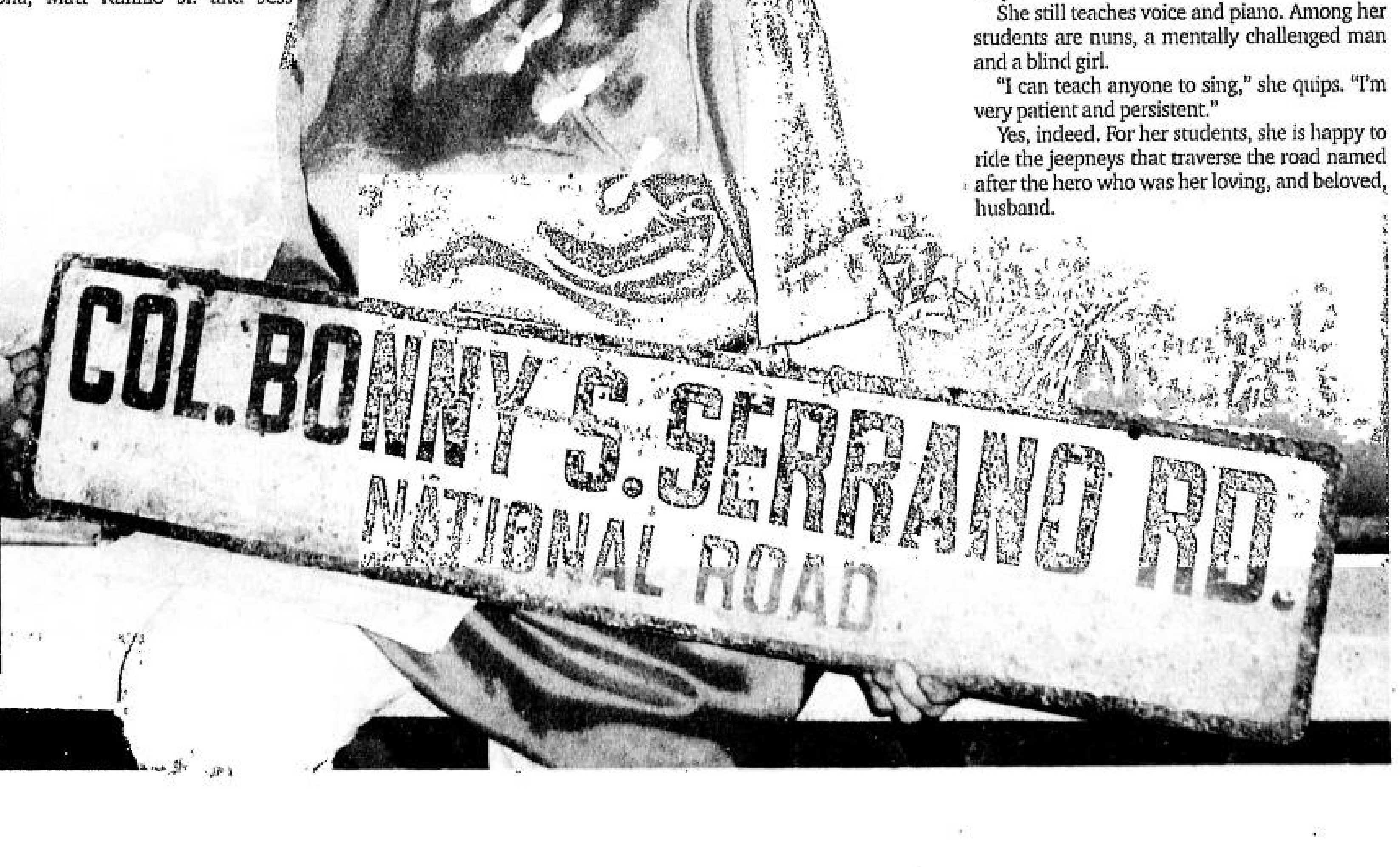
Recently, she played the piano in Malacañang, accompanying classical singer Gamaliel Viray in a show for the diplomatic corps.

She still teaches voice and piano. Among her students are nuns, a mentally challenged man and a blind girl.

"I can teach anyone to sing," she quips. "I'm very patient and persistent."

Yes, indeed. For her students, she is happy to ride the jeepneys that traverse the road named after the hero who was her loving, and beloved, husband.

TODAY, with daughter Johanna, son Bonny Jr. and grandson Joaquin.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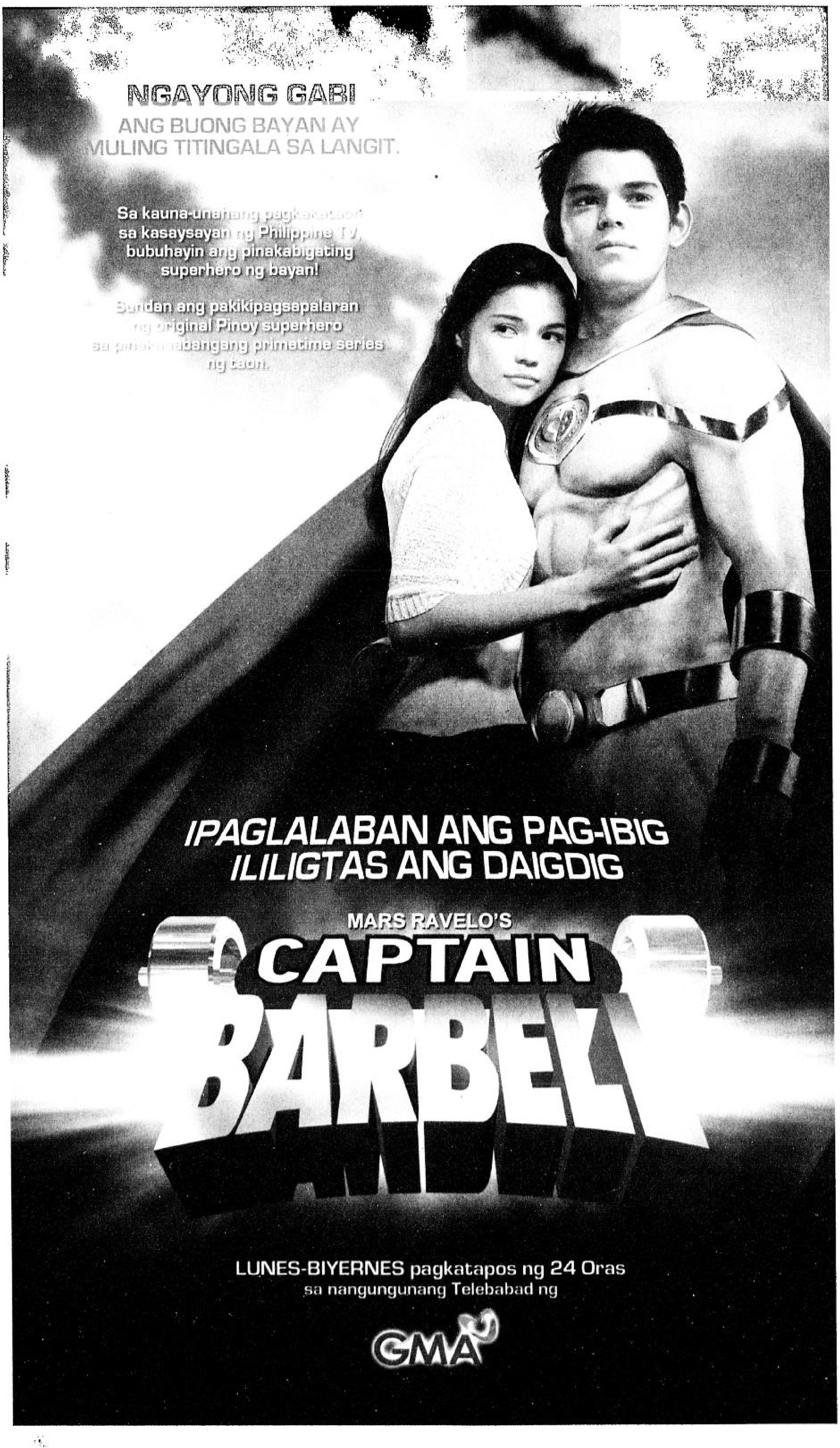
Christian Bautista & Jennylyn Mercado (May 27) Starmall Edsa

SINGING VISITORS. "Little Big Stars" monthly finalists visited the INQUIRER recently, to show off vocal skills that subsequently propelled three of them to the next level of the ABS-CBN competition. The trio to beat: Christian Olog (far right) in the Little division and Angelie Urquico (far left) and Laurice Bermillo (second from right) in the Big division.

ROGER MARGALLO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MARS RAVELO'S
CAPTAIN BARBELL
LUNES-BIYERNES pagkatapos ng 24 Oras
sa nangungunang Telebabad ng
GMA

Bright Belinda!

SEXY BELINDA BRIGHT SAYS she is flying to Jakarta, Indonesia, next month to record an album that will be marketed there before it is launched in the Philippines.

The singer announced this during an interview at the Renaissance Country Club in Albay, where INQUIRER Souther Luzon Bureau's Ephraim Aguilar was present.

"This is my first stint with an international management agency," said Bright, 22, who is now handled by Stars Philippines which has branches in Malaysia and other Asian countries.

Two local recording artists who have made it big in Indonesia are Christian Bautista and Regine Velazquez.

Machete, is that you?

The wards of a children's facility called recent visitor Gardo Versoza, "Apo Abukay," after his character on the GMA 7 series "Sugo." Quite tellingly, inmates at the next-door maximum security prison recognized the actor as "Machete," after his 1990s Seiko movie role. This prompted fellow visitor Jaclyn Jose to whisper to Gardo, "These older guys have been jailed too long."

Mom-to-be

Actress and Quezon City councilor Aiko Melendez says she is eager to become a mom the second time around. She plans to name her forthcoming child Martina, after her husband of three months, fashion model Martin Jickain.

Oprah's 'problem'

In New York, the Associated Press reports that Rappers Ludacris and 50 Cent have dissed Oprah Winfrey.

Rapper-actor Ice Cube also has a beef with her. "I've been involved in three projects pitched to her, but I've never been asked to participate," Ice Cube tells FHM magazine in its July issue, according to AP. "Maybe she's got a problem with hip-hop. She's had damn rapists, child molesters and lying authors on her show. If I'm not a rags-to-riches story for her, who is?"

Decided to divorce

Double Oscar-winner Hilary Swank has divorced her husband of more than eight years, actor Chad Lowe, Agence France Presse reports; quoting People Magazine.

CHAD Lowe

Swank and Lowe "have jointly decided to divorce," the couple's lawyer, Jeffrey Bernstein, told the magazine. "They continue to be friends."

The couple married on September 28, 1997, five years after meeting at a party. They have no children.

Pamela's cause

AP also reports that actress Pamela Anderson was in Tokyo on Friday to promote AIDS awareness in Asia. The actress said she had been inspired by her own experience, having been diagnosed earlier with Hepatitis C, to urge people who might be infected to get tested and seek medical help.

Baby Stefani

It's a baby boy for Gwen Stefani, her internet site reported on Friday, according to AFP.

Stefani and her husband Gavin Rossdale "welcomed" Kingston James McGregor Rossdale, 7.5 lbs on May 26, 2006," said the statement on her website, adding that the child was born in Los Angeles.

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PNOC unit to go public in September

IPO to cover firm's P7-B funding requirement from 2006 to 2009

By Abigail L. Ho

PHILIPPINE NATIONAL OIL CO.-ENERGY DEVELOPment Corp. (PNOC-EDC) will be selling 30-40 percent of its shares in the local bourse by September, junking a block equity sale model for its privatization.

Eduardo Mañalac, president and chief executive of PNOC-EDC parent firm PNOC, said the PNOC-EDC board and privatization committee recently approved the privatization plan.

The next steps would be to secure the approval of the PNOC board, and then of the Privatization Council. These approvals should be in place within this week, he said.

"The intent or hope is to complete the (initial public offering) by the start of September. We want to get it done quickly," he said.

The range of 30-40 percent was put in place, he said, to allow some room for adjustment, depending on how the market would react to the offering.

Mañalac said the financial adviser for the deal, CLSA Capital Partners, expected some foreign cash to come in.

Part of the IPO proceeds would be used to address "bullet" payments for some PNOC-EDC build-operate-transfer (BOT) contracts falling due some time in the third quarter, he said.

This would amount to between $40 million and $50 million, he said. The next big payment, around $90 million, would have to be made in 2009.

PNOC/ B6

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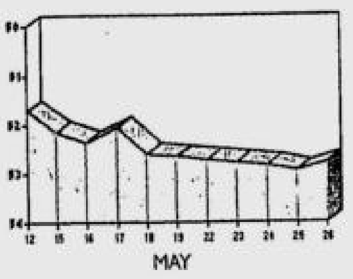

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As of 5 p.m., May 26, 2006

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As of 5 p.m., May 26, 2006

STOCK MARKET

Technical rebound seen

SHARE PRICES ARE EXPECTED to rebound this week after getting pummeled the past weeks due to interest rate jitters.

"However, the upside may be limited as some fund managers are still in a profit-taking mode. It will be a technical rebound within a correction of a long-term uptrend," AB Capital Securities said.

The PSEi lost 55.36 points or 2.36 percent to 2,300.39 last week.

AB Capital Securities said in its weekly note to clients that global markets continued to roll from

TECHNICAL / B6

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Victor C. Agustin

WITH NO LESS THAN CORAZON Aquino and Cardinal Rosales leading the Manila guests, Manuel V. Pangilinan on Thursday celebrated with his Indonesian principals the 25th anniversary of the First Pacific Group in Hong Kong in a star-studded dinner-concert.

And, in a testimony that all is well after the foiled Gokongwei bid for PLDT and Metro Pacific strained relations between MVP and the Salims, First Pacific chair Anthoni Salim toasted the PLDT chair before the Filipino guests and his father, First Pacific and Indofood patriarch Soedono Salim, saying that MVP was like a "brother" to him.

The Prietos of the INQUIRER, the Belmontes of Star, GMA-7's Gilberto Duavit Jr., and the PLDT board were among the guests flown in by business class from Manila.

Outgoing PLDT board director, SM heiress Teresita Sy, also attended the affair, as well as Benguet Corp. chair Benjamin Philip Romualdez, accompanying his wife, INQUIRER president Alexandra Prieto.

No Filipino politician or government official was invited, except for Sen. Francis Pangilinan, in his capacity as chaperon to his megastar wife, Sharon Cuneta, a PLDT talent.

With Martin Nievera emceeing, Sharon Cuneta, Kuh Ledesma, Zsa-zsa Padilla, Lani Misalucha, Kris Aquino, Mon David and Christian Bautista turned the overflow ballroom of the uppity hotel into a Philippine-style festive event.

Guests, including former First Pacific/Metro Pacific executives Vicente Tinsay and Ricardo Pascua, who could no longer be accommodated at the Four Seasons, were booked at the nearby Ritz-Carlton.

To celebrate the returning fortunes of the Hong Kong-based conglomerate, the driven First Pacific executives were each awarded a gold ingot, in numbers enough, according to the mischievous grapevine, to perk up the Hong Kong gold market that day.

MVP himself, First Pacific and PLDT board member Ambassador Albert del Rosario announced, had been conferred by President Macapagal-Arroyo with the Order of Lakandula award, rank of Komandante, on account of the remarkable turnaround and the subsequent improved tax contributions of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone group.

If the record earnings of PLDT/Smart/Piltel continue this year, what kind of corporate celebration could be forthcoming when MVP turns 60 in July?

Peso and the Big Mac index

THIS year's installment of the Big Mac index shows that the Philippine currency is—despite this year's appreciation—still 48 percent undervalued compared to the US dollar.

Developed by the Economist magazine 20 years ago using the US homeland price of Big Mac as base, the index compares the local prices of the hamburger in US dollar to provide a tasty, if somewhat fat-inducing, measure of the purchasing power parity of the different national currencies where the McDonald's hamburger restaurant chain has a presence.

In contrast, the Indonesian Big Mac, in US currency at May 22 exchange rates, is slightly cheaper, at -49 percent; Hong Kong and Thailand, -50 percent; Malaysia, -51 percent; Macau, -55 percent, and China, -58 percent.

Unlike during the Erap years when the peso was trading at the P56 level and the Philippines consequently had the cheapest Big Mac along with China, dollar-wise, it is now slightly easier on the pocket to wolf down the same burger in Hong Kong, despite the territory still being one of the world's most expensive cities.

Money-go-round

- EXCEPT for president/CEO Ramon Sy, who turns 76 this year and who has expressed his intention to retire, the rest of the top iBank management officials will be integrated with Union Bank, post merger.

MVP/ B4

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Persistent criticisms against BIR chief alarm business groups

LEADING BUSINESSmen and several business groups, have warned against an apparent smear campaign against Commissioner Jose Mario Buñag of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), saying a vilification campaign "is unfair, unnecessary and counterproductive."

The Tax Management Association of the Philippines (TMAP) said there appeared to be "a sustained effort to project the April revenue collection figures as a dismal failure despite the actual improvement in collection performance levels."

There had been many shortfalls in the past but this was the only time that we were seeing a BIR chief being crucified loudly in public for an alleged collection failure, the group said.

TMAP president Clarissa Arguelles also expressed concern over an apparent effort to project Buñag as "a bureaucrat hanging on to his seat desperately."

We cannot understand why it was being made to appear that the BIR chief was under threat of being fired by the Finance Secretary due to the April collection figures, she asked.

"If there is a need to bring in a new BIR chief due to political pressure, why don't they just ask Buñag to go quietly and we are sure he will just be happy to go," she added. The prolonged public drama on the April collection figures and the threat of removing Buñag was causing anxiety in the business community, Arguelles explained.

Other business groups earlier cautioned the government against replacing Buñag "so as not to upset the gains achieved by the country in terms of investor confidence."

Audit of tax deductions pushed

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF Internal Revenue has been urged to step up efforts in auditing the taxable income declared by corporate taxpayers following the release of a study hinting that over-declaration of allowable deductions may have become rampant.

The National Tax Research Center (NTRC), tasked to conduct tax-related studies, said in a research paper that on average, allowable deductions claimed by sample corporate taxpayers reached 70.54 percent of their gross income. This left a very low amount of base that the BIR could tax.

NTRC said a significant number of sample firms exceeded prescribed ceilings on allowable deductions that could be claimed.

It said 13 percent of 494 companies declared deductions for "entertainment expenses" whose amounts breached prescribed ceiling, and that 23 percent of

AUDIT/B5

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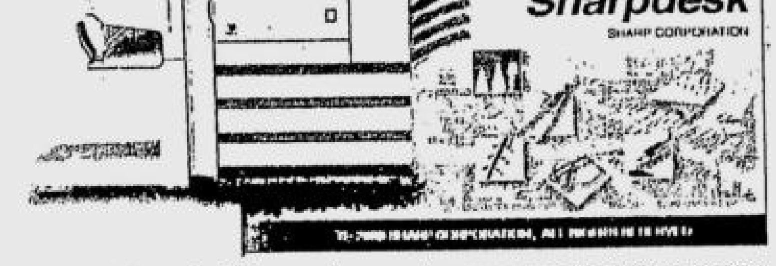

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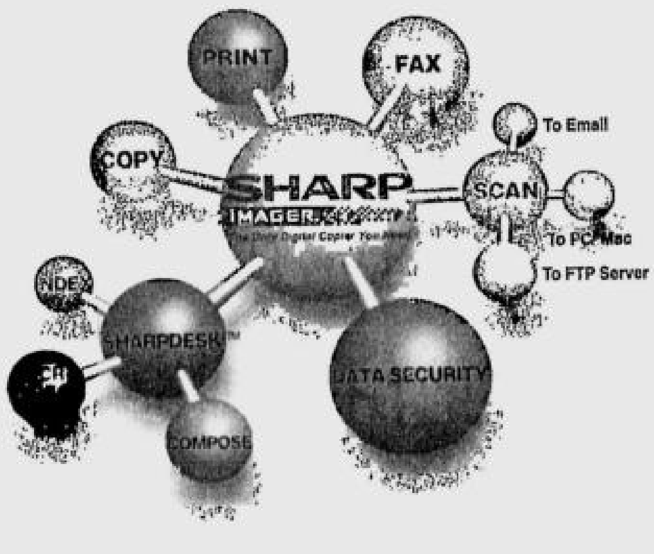

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Development with equity

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

LAST WEEKEND, SOME 50 PROjects proposed by various NGOs all over the country won funding averaging a million pesos each in the second Panibagong Paraan competition. This is the local version of the World Bank's regular "Development Innovation Marketplace," which is spearheaded by the institution in cooperation with numerous partners in a number of countries around the world, including at its head office in Washington D.C. Pooling together resources from numerous local and international funding partners, the competition brings together the best ideas from the nongovernment sector for initiatives to help uplift Filipinos' lives. The theme for this year's competition was Development with Equity, in line with the theme of the World Bank's last World Development Report.

Micro and macro

The various NGO project proposals competing for the Panibagong Paraan funding support represent micro-level initiatives that would pursue development with equity at the grassroots or community level. To set the tone for the weekend affair that showcased the various competing projects, I was asked to speak along with DSWD Secretary Esperanza Cabral and Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo on the competition's theme. Secretary Cabral described the government's current efforts to combat poverty spearheaded by her department, particularly through the Kalahi-CIDSS program. Mayor Robredo shared his numerous exemplary initiatives for his city that have won him Hall of Fame status in the annual Gawad Galing Pook award, among many other local and international awards he and his city have earned.

I spoke on how to get out of the narrow, shallow and hollow development outcomes that we have tended to achieve through the years. To my mind, this challenge entails four major thrusts: SME promotion, empowering LGUs, harnessing NGO-business-government partnerships, and putting highest priority on education reform.

Clearing SME hurdles

Many of us now recognize that the big business-dominated economic growth path we have tread on in the past decades brought us to our current situation of inequitable development. In the past year alone, large corporations posted hefty double-digit, even triple-digit growth rates in their net profits, even as hunger reached record highs and human development indicators especially on nutrition and education further turned for the worse. Our economic production has been subject to the familiar 80-20 rule: 80 percent of the economy's output comes from the largest 20 percent of our productive enterprises. I have long held the view that if we are to create at least a million jobs every year to gainfully employ the same number of new workers who enter the labor force annually, these jobs must come from small and medium enterprises, not large ones. For one thing, the cost of creating one job in the SME sector is just a fraction of what it costs to do so in a large enterprise. An SME approach also promotes more geographically and sectorally dispersed job creation.

Helping SMEs requires definitive solutions to address their traditional difficulties in accessing financing, technology, raw materials and markets. But it also requires that SMEs practice "coopetition," a cooperative form of competition wherein they are prepared to band together especially to meet volume demands from buyers abroad. I have heard so many times of how the *kanya-kanya* (individualistic) attitude of our business people have led to countless missed opportunities in the export markets.

LGUs do it best

The LGUs are best-placed to pursue development with equity. They are the units of government closest to the people, and to the problems they face. And they are naturally obliged to be responsive to the needs of the greater number, as local officials need their constituents' votes to survive.

Mayor Robredo spoke on the crucial challenge of replicating good projects and good practices. He should know. He has done so many wonderful things in Naga City that one would think other LGUs would readily emulate. But too often, people—especially politicians—want their own distinctive trademark, and shy away from "merely" copying or continuing someone else's (especially a predecessor's) success story. But there are already countless exemplary practices at the LGU level waiting to be copied and adapted by governors and mayors to their own local conditions. One only needs to look at the more than 10 years of Gawad Galing Pook awardees and finalists to get a wealth of ideas on how LGUs can effectively uplift the lives of the disadvantaged.

Caring and sharing

Development initiatives work best when they tap synergies between the government and nongovernment sectors, with the latter including private business, NGOs, people's organizations and communities themselves. Initiatives like the Gawad Kalinga, Adopt-A-School, and Operation Compassion have already done much good. There is a wealth of goodwill in Filipinos' hearts, waiting for opportunities to find concrete expression through tangible mechanisms for helping a poor fellow Filipino. Through funding support, Panibagong Paraan has just enabled some 50 initiatives to harness such partnerships. But we don't need the World Bank and its funding partners to do so. Those among us with deep pockets can find our own ways of turning the Filipinos' well-acknowledged inherent caring nature into concrete, effective and enduring mechanisms for sharing.

Comments welcome at chabito@ateneo.edu

Crackdown on illegal foreign insurers pushed

By Michelle V. Remo

THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY has prodded the government to crackdown on unlicensed foreign insurers whose illegal operations in the country have been blamed for loss of market share by legitimate players.

The Philippine Life Insurance Association (PLIA) cited the alleged selling of insurance products by Swiss-based Zurich Life, which do not carry a license to operate in the Philippines.

"Such transactions made by Zurich Financial Services/Zurich International Life are not only a loss of business to our domestic insurers but also a significant loss of tax revenues to our government," Peter Coyiuto, PLIA president, told the INQUIRER.

Coyiuto said PLIA has already aired its grievance to the Insurance Commission and the National Bureau of Investigation.

PLIA's Jaime Santiago, executive vice president of First Life, said that unlicensed foreign-owned insurance firms pose unfair competition to legitimate players because the former, being unlicensed, evade the payment of appropriate taxes, including the 5-percent tax on insurance premiums.

PLIA officers also said operations of unlicensed insurance firms made customers vulnerable to fraud because these firms were not monitored by regulators.

Zurich used to be a licensed seller of life insurance products, but was eventually dissolved when it was bought by Manulife.

MVP's most valuable …

From page B2

• TERESITA Bermudez Choa, widow of one of the founders of Far East Bank and Trust Co., has been elected president of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines for a three-year term. Choa was also the first Filipina to be elected president of the Soroptimist International of the Americas.

Heard through the grapevine

PALAWAN Gov. Joel Reyes has written Natural Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes, asking his department to stop the mining explorations being undertaken by taipan Lucio Tan's Macro Asia in Brooke's Point, Palawan.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net orcocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Audit …

From page B3

them claimed deductions for "charitable contributions" whose costs also exceeded a given ceiling.

In doing the study, the NTRC used income tax returns for 2003 submitted by firms not considered a large taxpayer. A non-large taxpayer is a firm whose income tax liabilities is below P1 million.

Because of very high claims of allowable deductions, the NTRC suggested that the BIR implement measures that could help it better detect the accuracy of allowable deductions claimed by corporate taxpayers.

The NTRC added that the BIR should strictly enforce the "industry benchmarking" program, which the revenue agency recently introduced as a tax-auditing strategy.

Under the program, the BIR sets benchmarks on income and supposed tax payments per industry. Any taxpayer that will declare an income much lower than the benchmark for its industry would be subjected to tighter audit.

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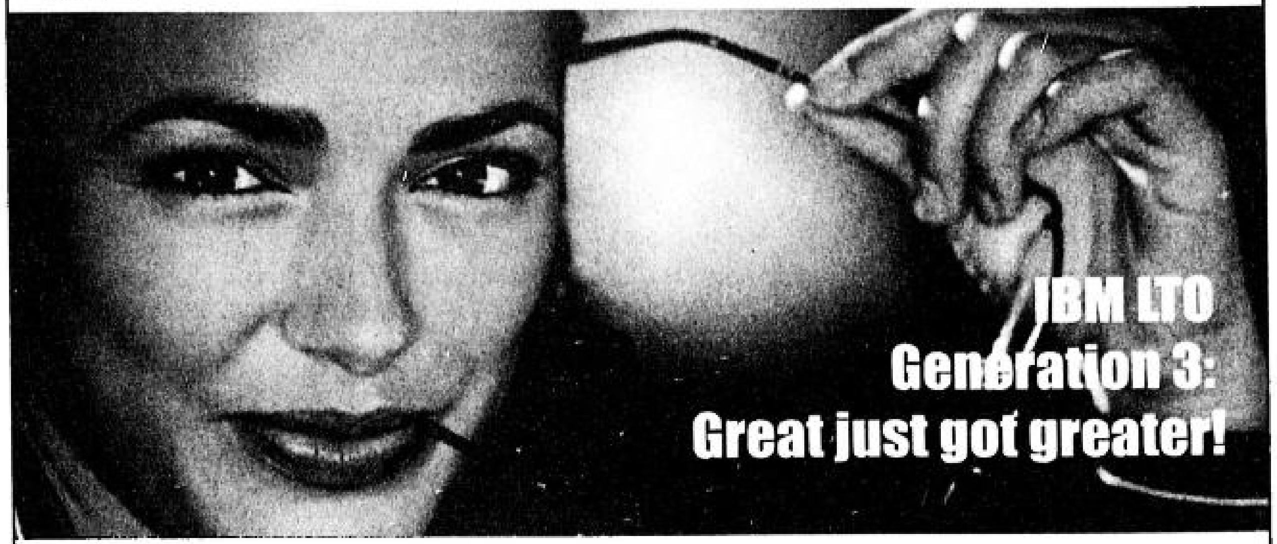

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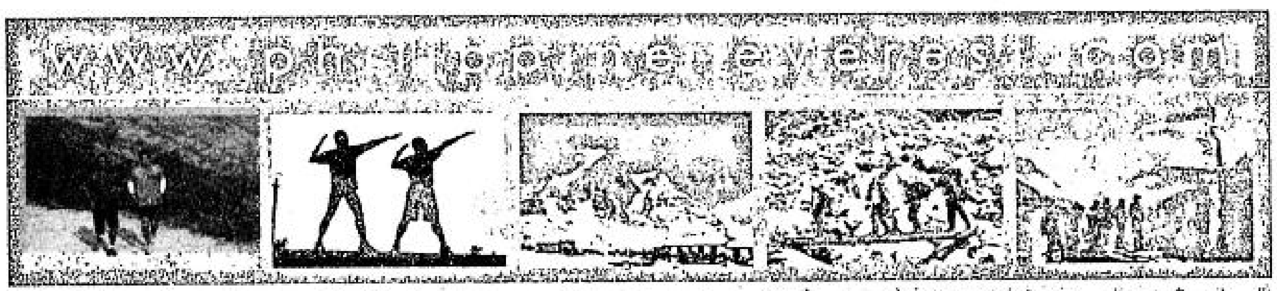
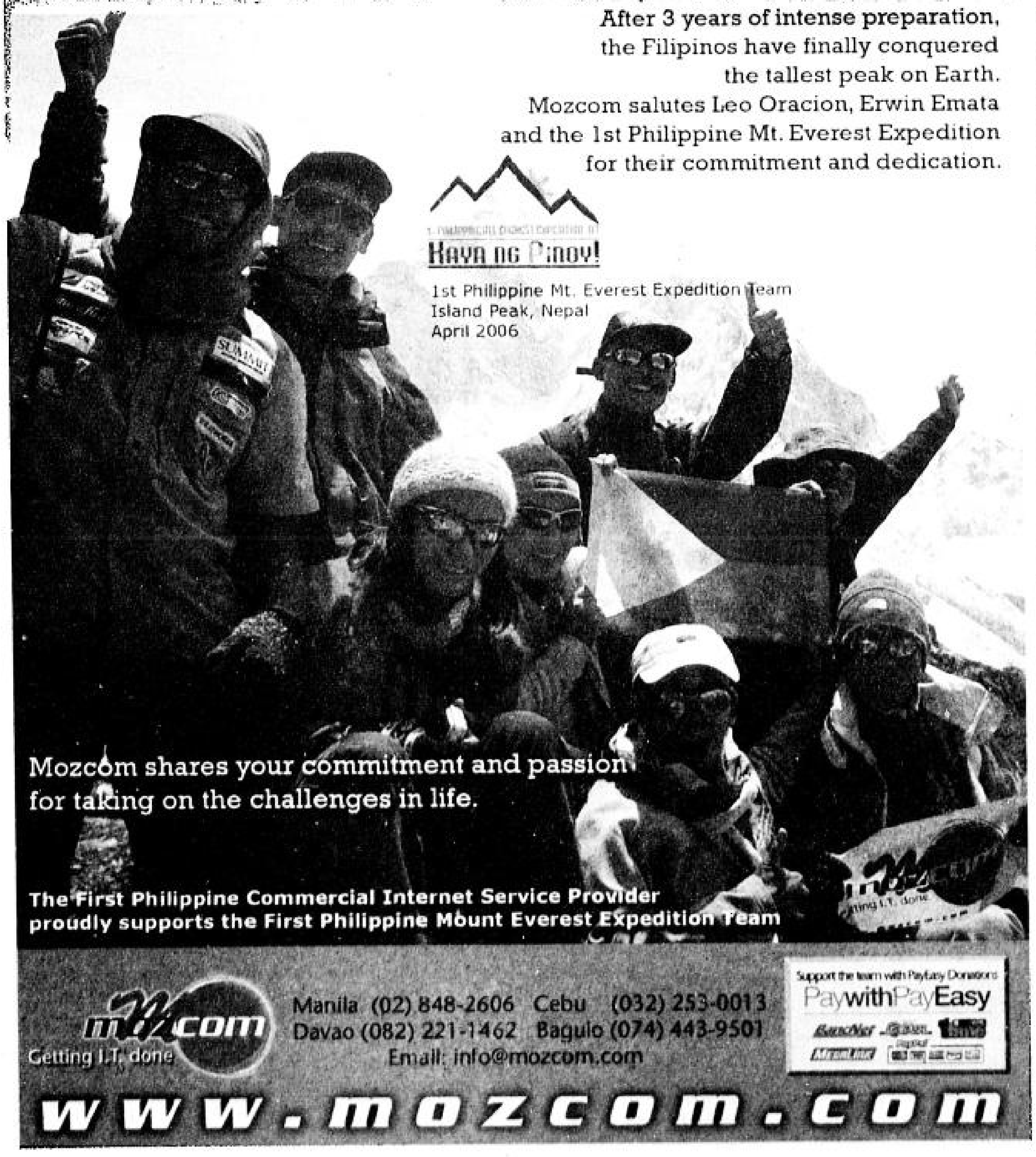
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SMC seen raising $1.1B from sale of Aussie stake

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOOD AND BEVERAGE CONGLOMERATE San Miguel Corp. may raise about AU$1.47 billion (approximately $1.1 billion) from the possible sale of its 49-percent stake in National Foods Ltd. through a private placement.

Sources said there were three investors interested in San Miguel's stake in the Australian dairy company.

Proceeds from the possible sale of National Foods would be used to repay debts incurred by the company to fund its aggressive expansion into the Asia-Pacific food and beverage market, sources said.

Sought for comment, SMC president Ramon S. Ang said: "There are offers but there are no material developments to disclose as of this time."

Sources estimated that National Foods might be worth AU$3 billion today.

Last year, San Miguel beat rival bidder New Zealand's Fonterra Co-Operative Group in the race for National Foods after Fonterra backed out of its bid for control of the dairy company. SMC offered to buy National Foods at AU$1.9 billion, topping Fonterra's AU$1.84-billion offer.

Showing its investment was worth the battle, National Foods reported sales revenue was up 5 percent at AU$441 million in the first quarter due to the growth in volume sales of its dairy and juice segments.

National Foods is integrated with another San Miguel-owned Australian juice brand, Berri Ltd.

Volume sales for dairy and juice products grew 4 percent in the first quarter compared with the same period last year. No specific figures were mentioned in San Miguel's recently filed first-quarter financial report.

Operating income also rose 5 percent to AU$37.5 million due to higher volumes and effective cost management.

To further boost its business, National Foods had acquired Australian specialty cheese business Lactos Pty. Ltd. from French firm Bongrain International SAS.

Lactos is one of Australia's leading specialty cheesemakers producing fine cheese under key brands Tasmanian Heritage, Mersey Valley and Australian Gold. Its manufacturing operations are at Burnie and a smaller farmhouse cheese manufacturing facility at Heidi in Tasmania. It also has a cut-and-wrap facility in Mulgrave, Victoria.

The acquisition will increase National Foods' exposure in the fast-growing, high-value cheese segment following its acquisition of The King Island Co. in February 2002.

"Lactos is a significant acquisition for National Foods and will contribute to the development of our growing cheese and gourmet foods business," National Foods managing director Ashley Waugh had said.

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Tagaytay Country Club	360,000	320,000
Tagaytay Highlands	700,000	600,000
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Israeli firm spends ₱500M to buy 40% of Filinvest unit

AFRICA ISRAEL INTERNATIONAL PROPERties Ltd., one of the biggest companies in Israel, has invested roughly half a billion pesos to acquire 40 percent of Cyberzone Properties Inc. (CPI), a subsidiary of Filinvest Alabang Inc.

Filinvest Development Corp. president Josephine Gotianun-Yap said Africa Israel was bullish about the demand for call centers and was encouraged by the take-up of call center buildings in FAI's information technology park at the Northgate Cyberzone in Alabang.

Under an agreement signed with CPI, a Philippine Economic Zone Authority-accredited facilities provider that pioneered build-to-suit offices in FAI's Northgate Cyberzone, Africa Israel has agreed to subscribe to up to 40 percent of CPI.

The balance of 60 percent in CPI is owned by FAI.

Africa Israel has investments in real estate, shopping malls, energy, fashion, telecommunications, media and infrastructure. Its shares are traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Yap also said that the Filinvest Group was in talks with Africa Israel for other ways in which they could expand their partnership. She did not give details.

This year, FAI is taking P2.5 billion out of the Filinvest group's P4.5-billion budget for key projects to build IT buildings.

To address the pressing demand for IT office spaces, CPI started constructing Plaz@A, a six-storey building with a leasable area of 11,000 square meters at the NorthGate Cyberzone in Alabang last year. Plaz@A is targeted to be completed by June this year. Locators in this area include GenPact, an outsourcing subsidiary of General Electric and eTelecare.

CPI also broke ground last February on Plaz@D, a mirror image of Plaz@A. By the second quarter this year, a third building will be built. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

PNOC unit to go public in Sept.

From page B1

Under the privatization plan, the geothermal power plants would be packaged with long-term steam sale agreements. This means that the steam fields will not be included in the package.

In an earlier interview, PNOC-EDC president and chief executive Paul Aquino said the IPO proceeds would be enough to cover its funding requirements from this year to 2009.

"With the proceeds from this offering, we'll have enough funds, and we won't need to rely all the time on national government guarantees and on funds from our parent firm," he said.

From 2006 to 2009, PNOC-EDC accounting manager Elvira Punsalan said the company's funding requirements amounted to P7 billion.

Of this, P2.9 billion would be used to fund the remaining payment requirements for its BOT contracts as well as its working capital requirements, and P2.4 billion would be used for the exploration of five geothermal areas that would generate an estimated additional 270 megawatts within the next two years, she said.

Another P760 million would bankroll the construction of the Nasulo power plant this year, and P950 million would be earmarked for the acquisition of a modern rig and the rehabilitation of PNOC-EDC's existing units next year, she added.

This year alone, she said PNOC-EDC's funding requirements reached P3.3 billion. Another P1.8 billion would be needed next year, P1.2 billion in 2008 and P700 million in 2009.

Aquino said PNOC-EDC was "near the end of (its) cash hardships" as the last of its BOT payments would be made in 2009.

The company would then have a better handle on its cash, including the proceeds from its planned IPO, he said.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 26, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	5.8	5.8	5.5	5.5	23,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36.5	37	35.5	37	1,635,300
Bank Of the Phil. Islands	61.5	63.5	61.5	63.5	1,835,700
China Banking Corp.	875	890	875	890	560
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	600
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.4	0.41	0.4	0.4	1,400,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	65.5	72	65.5	72	159,000
International Exch. Bank	40.5	41	40.5	41	22,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	37	37.5	37	37	950,600
Philippine National Bank	33.5	33.5	33	33	13,600
Phil. Savings Bank	39.5	39.5	39.5	39.5	3,700
Philippine Trust Co.	38	38	38	38	8,200
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	16	16	15	16	16,800
Security Bank Corp.	49.5	50	48.5	50	176,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	46	48	46	48	16,500
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Abacus Financial	0.49	0.5	0.47	0.5	200,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	31	31.5	31	31.5	15,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2100	2090	2090	350
Ivantage Corp.	1.26	1.32	1.24	1.24	11,519,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	47	49	47	48	110,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	46	46.5	46	46.5	429,300
Manila Electric Co. A	13	13.5	13	13.5	16,300
Manila Electric Co. B	20.75	21.25	20.75	21.25	1,002,100
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.8	6.9	6.8	6.8	4,028,000
Petron Corp.	4.25	4.4	4.25	4.4	6,056,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	75,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.25	3.3	3.25	3.25	77,000
CADP Group Corp.	3	3	3	3	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	23.25	23.25	23.25	23.25	16,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	36	36.5	36	36.5	375,700
Pancake House Inc.	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	20,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.85	2.9	2.8	2.85	1,481,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	63.5	63	63.5	88,900
San Miguel Corp. B	76	76	75.5	76	53,100
Universal Robina Corp.	19	19.25	19	19	3,936,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.22	0.22	1,510,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.31	730,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.42	1.46	1.38	1.38	1,320,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.5	167,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.2	1.24	1.18	1.18	60,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0975	0.0975	0.095	0.095	3,900,000
Panasonic Mfg Phil Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	3,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	23,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	10,000,000
Ayala Corp.	405	410	402.5	407.5	274,040
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.53	0.53	0.53	0.53	220,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	240,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	1,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.027	0.029	0.027	0.027	11,600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.3	3.3	3.15	3.15	2,196,000
APC Group Inc.	0.225	0.225	0.22	0.22	150,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	17,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.9	0.93	0.9	0.91	1,640,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.4	1.4	73,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.8	9.8	9.7	9.8	61,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.16	1.1	1.1	13,795,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.8	3.95	3.7	3.95	1,908,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.25	1,132,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	6.7	6.8	6.7	6.8	536,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	6,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	3,700,000
SM Investments Corp.	220	224	220	224	313,120
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.0525	0.055	0.0525	0.055	1,300,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.105	0.105	0.1	0.1	1,000,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	12.5	12.75	12.5	12.75	18,113,100
Belle Corp.	1.14	1.18	1.12	1.14	3,275,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	990,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.06	2.1	2.06	2.06	796,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.195	0.2	0.195	0.2	2,200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.58	0.6	0.58	0.58	8,810,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.042	0.042	0.039	0.039	12,700,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.4	6,779,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.0825	0.0825	0.0825	0.0825	200,000
Interport Res.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	10,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	5,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	20,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.52	810,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.56	1.58	1.54	1.56	74,472,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.225	7,400,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.21	0.26	0.21	0.26	20,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	200,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	10.5	11	10.5	11	67,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	1,120,000
SM Development Corp.	1.58	1.62	1.58	1.62	361,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.9	4,522,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.075	0.0875	0.075	0.08	11,300,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	14.75	16	14.75	15.75	203,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.26	1.28	1.26	1.26	6,828,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	915	930	915	920	45,290
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.65	3.75	3.65	3.7	6,597,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1950	2010	1950	2010	174,940
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.2	0.205	0.195	0.2	600,000
Ionics Inc.	1.86	1.9	1.86	1.9	297,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	8,000,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.32	1.52	1.32	1.4	24,000
Philweb Corp.	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	241,800,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8	21,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	100,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	13.5	13.75	13.5	13.5	330,200
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	5	5	3.65	4.45	252,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	200,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	1,400,000
EDUCATION					
Ipeople Inc.	2.95	3	2.95	3	72,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.1	2.22	2.1	2.1	421,000
Paxys Inc.	11.25	11.5	11.25	11.25	169,400
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.1	3,614,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc B	2.9	3.25	2.9	3.15	3,848,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.008	0.0085	0.008	0.0085	63,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.7	7.1	6.7	7	3,525,000
Benguet Corp. A	11.5	11.5	11.5	11.5	35,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	10,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.31	0.31	0.29	0.29	45,990,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	6,900,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.023	0.024	0.023	0.023	92,900,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.024	0.025	0.024	0.024	179,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	417,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	3.75	3.85	3.7	3.75	17,915,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	3.8	3.9	3.7	3.75	19,052,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	27.5	28	27.5	27.5	122,200
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.32	0.35	0.32	0.32	140,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.54	0.55	0.53	0.55	1,320,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.28	0.29	0.28	0.29	980,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	226,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.012	62,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.18	1.24	1.16	1.2	1,862,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.18	1.22	1.16	1.18	2,422,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	14.25	14.25	13.75	13.75	478,500
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series P	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	300
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	15.25	16	15	15.75	1,299,100

CURRENCIES

May 26, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.781861	1.000000	52.9200
Japan	Yen	0.006993	0.008944	0.4733
United Kingdom	Pound	1.463174	1.871400	99.0345
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.100799	0.128922	6.8226
Switzerland	Franc	0.641974	0.821085	43.4518
Canada	Dollar	0.706288	0.903342	47.8049
Singapore	Dollar	0.495444	0.633673	33.5340
Australia	Dollar	0.592185	0.757404	40.0818
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.074727	2.653576	140.4272
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.208485	0.266652	14.1112
Brunei	Dollar	0.493880	0.631672	33.4281
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000107	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.020417	0.026113	1.3819
UAE	Dirham	0.212925	0.272331	14.4118
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.279000	67.6847
Brazil	Real	0.337081	0.431127	22.8152
Denmark	Kroner	0.134089	0.171500	9.0758
India	Rupee	0.017094	0.021863	1.1570
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.214502	0.274348	14.5185
Mexico	New Peso	0.070220	0.089811	4.7528
New Zealand	Dollar	0.499209	0.638488	33.7888
South Africa	Rand	0.119446	0.152772	8.0847
Korea	Won	0.000824	0.001054	0.0558
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024360	0.031157	1.6488

Technical rebound seen

From page B1

the interest rate punches dealt in the United States, knocking down the PSEi back to the 2,240 level within the week before recovering last Friday near the 2,300 mark.

This was the third straight week that the local market was beaten up, bringing stock prices to what analysts called "an oversold territory" or a level where prices might be soon pick up after hitting the bottom.

Reports of massive redemptions from Unit Investment Trust Funds (UITFs), a form of investment offered by banks with high yields, also accelerated the local market's drop, fueling a selling spree in local equities. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

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The Real Stripes Matter.

PLDT seeks to boost sagging landline business

New pricing scheme seen to perk up telco's core business

By Daxim L. Lucas

WITH A NEW PRICING SCHEME, the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) hopes to revive its stagnant landline business, which has been overshadowed by mobile phones in recent years, according to a company official.

The new promo, which the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) approved last week, will initially be applied to "pilot areas" in order to test the business model and the technology that will be used to support it, PLDT spokesperson Ramon R. Isberto said.

"We do hope that this will better position us to perk up the landline business in the target areas," Isberto said.

The new scheme cuts the price of landline services to as low as P300 a month from the existing rate of over P700 a month for residential subscribers.

Company officials clarified that the service will initially be launched only in selected target areas, although it will not be restricted to new PLDT clients only. This means that existing subscribers may opt to convert their services to the proposed "Economy Plans."

The pilot program is being conducted in order to test new service packages on a limited scale and to maximize capacity utilization in certain areas, Isberto explained, adding that the new service schemes "are designed to provide new subscribers additional options in terms of pricing and service features."

The results of PLDT's pilot program will determine which new areas the service will be provided

PLDT/B11

Jaraula's parliament: Big hoax

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Honesto C. General

CONSTANTINO JARAULA, CHAIR of the House committee on constitutional amendments was the guest on Pinky Webb's Talk show the other night. He was ecstatic over the merits of the parliamentary system.

But Jaraula's parliamentary dream is one big hoax.

He said that only under a parliamentary system might a member from the tiny island province of Camiguin or Batanes ever hope to become prime minister—so long as he happens to be the most talented in parliament. Why? Because under a parliamentary system, only the brightest is voted prime minister.

Jaraula was obviously implying that in a parliament, the ignorant masses do not vote. Only the highly educated members cast their ballots. As the communists in our midst would put it, Jaraula is elitist.

The member from Camiguin or Batanes, whether or not he is the brightest or the dumbest, will be elected prime minister only if he heads the ruling party or coalition. He might be, by far, the brightest of the lot but he will be consigned to the backbench if he heads the smallest party.

In a South American country some years ago, a confirmed idiot was elected prime minister. Fortunately for that country, in one lucid moment, the idiot resigned.

Then, Jaraula said that elections in a parliamentary system are much less expensive because the candidate for prime minister does not have to campaign nationwide. Tony Blair campaigned all over the United Kingdom to carve a solid majority for his New Labor Party. More recently, Angela Merkel campaigned all over Germany to become the first woman chancellor.

If Jaraula is interested, I will lend him a documentary showing Hitler hitting three cities a day, every day, in a campaign that won for the Nazi party 30 percent of the seats, making it the largest party in the Reichstag in 1932. He was the first to use the airplane to campaign.

If Erap were running under a parliamentary system in 1998, he would have had to campaign hard for his candidates in the Partido ng Masang Filipino all over the islands. To improve their chances of winning, he would have had to provide them with enough campaign funds. His party would have won 40 percent of the seats. Afterwards, Erap would have had to forge a coalition with some of the smaller parties to amass a majority vote. Only then would Erap get elected prime minister.

All the campaigning and wheeling and dealing would not have been cheaper than under a presidential system.

Jaraula complains that, in the present system, the president has too much power. But Jaraula's parliament fuses executive and legislative power on the prime minister. For example, parliament designs, approves and spends the national budget. With all that power in his hands, the prime minister is not even elected directly by the people.

Jaraula claims that the opposition will provide the check and balance found in the presidential system. The opposition can never provide check and balance. The majority will always outvote it …

Finally, Jaraula's biggest hoax is when he said that a parliamentary system would (miracle of miracles!) wipe out corruption in the Philippines because, if a member were corrupt, his constituents will remove him from his post forthwith. At this point of the show, I could see that Pinky Webb could hardly hide her incredulity.

In a survey by an international polling firm, the 21 most corrupt countries in the whole wide world (don't worry, Philippines is not one of them) are: Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Congo, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Laos, Paraguay, Turkmenistan, Somalia, North Korea, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Angola, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Niger, Sudan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

All these countries are under some form or other of the parliamentary system.

Jaraula insults the Filipino people if he thinks he can go on national TV and get away with his gigantic hoax. Let us hope that the electorate of Cagayan de Oro City, whom he represents in Congress, will kick him out in next year's elections.

Fitch expects RP to weather turbulence in Asia markets

By Doris C. Dumlao

LONDON-BASED CREDIT RATING agency Fitch Ratings is not alarmed over the heavy portfolio shakeout hounding the Philippines and other Asian emerging markets, saying the turbulence hasn't weakened the underlying credit fundamentals.

As long as the selldown won't balloon to crisis proportions, the recent selldown on emerging markets should not weigh down the Philippine government's capability to service its debts, said James McCormack, Fitch Ratings' senior director and head of Asia sovereign ratings.

"It shouldn't really affect the ratings because our view is that the markets may have gotten ahead of themselves," McCormack said in an interview at the sidelines of the 45th ACI World Congress hosted by Philippine foreign exchange traders.

"What we're seeing now is a change in risk appetite of investors, we think, and not necessarily a change on fundamentals," McCormack said. "It can turn into something that could affect credit fundamentals but, up to now, we haven't seen that."

Over the last three weeks, currencies, bonds and equities in emerging markets like the Philippines were rattled by worries over high inflation in the United States which, in turn, could preempt the earlier expected tailend in overnight interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve.

Many analysts still expect that most of the recent selloffs would be reversed, and that macroeconomic fundamentals in emerging markets would not have changed much to shift the long-run direction of global markets.

"A change in currency or a change in interest rates to defend the currency—they would have to be pretty significant in order to adjust or change the credit fundamentals of a country," McCormack said.

He acknowledged the Philippine government's recent fiscal gains but noted that a change in outlook to "positive" from "stable" was not likely in the immediate future due to lingering concerns over medium-term revenue collections.

Meanwhile, most market players are expecting the Philippines and other central banks to tighten monetary settings to make their local currency assets more attractive given a shift in investors' appetite away from emerging markets.

"I think on a regional basis, one may expect some interest hikes, but very gradual," said former Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho. "Governments will still be very concerned about the growth of the economy."

Camacho, vice chair at Credit Suisse's investment banking for emerging markets in Asia, said the current market sentiment was a challenge for countries with negative interest rate differentials versus offshore benchmarks.

"It's a very, very fine balancing act," he said. "It's very difficult. Some governments will have to be more aggressive, while some may be more prudent."

In the case of the Philippines, the consensus among resource speakers and other participants at the ACI World Congress is that the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas may have to jack up its overnight interest rates by 50 basis points in the second semester.

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Asia urged to curb reliance on US for growth

Regional cooperation seen key to progress

By Doris C. Dumlao

ASIA MUST BRACE FOR MORE EXTERNAL shocks by moving toward a new growth paradigm that relies less on US consumption and more on internal strength as well as regional economic cooperation and integration, the chief of investment banking giant Merrill Lynch said.

In a keynote speech before international currency traders at the closing of the 45th ACI World Congress hosted by the Philippines on Saturday, Merrill Lynch chair Kevan Watts said fast-growing Asia needed "a new dynamism to sustain growth and development in the next few years" as well-observed global imbalances were making policy adjustment inevitable.

The Philippine initiatives to shore up internal economic fundamentals by reducing reliance on external debts and boosting revenue collections were particularly lauded as an example in the right direction.

He said the US housing market was a major driver in the global economy that was now losing momentum, on top of external shocks from skyrocketing oil prices, global terrorism and concerns over the Asian bird flu.

"Asia has benefited enormously over the past five years from the easy availability of credit and in particular the readiness of American homeowners to spend some of their newfound wealth," Watts said, noting that Asian central banks had accumulated nearly $2 trillion in reserves through a model reliant on exporting to the world's biggest economy.

Going forward, he also warned that the full effects of recent oil shocks could adversely affect Asia greatly.

"With excess capacity at low levels and with prices increasingly driven by supply-side concerns, any future adverse impact is likely to be greater than in the recent past," Watts said. "We have already seen the beginning of some political consequences of these changing economic dynamics in the form of heightened protectionist trade pressures, particularly in the US."

Protectionist winds

"The vagaries of the American election cycle and the weakened status of a second-term president will likely ensure that these protectionist winds gather pace," he said.

Jitters over an Asian bird flu and its potential to evolve into something that could be transmitted from one human being to another, as well as the threat of global terrorism, were likewise shocks that Asia must guard against, he added.

"We are facing new challenges in the global economy and Asia in particular needs to find ways to sustain growth and development without strong consumption growth in the US."

Watts said that this suggested a need for stronger internally generated growth in Asia, perhaps combining a lower savings rate and greater readiness for Asian countries to invest in each other.

Establishing such a paradigm would not be easy, Watts admitted, but stressed that Asia could kick off with the pillars of regional economic integration unveiled by the Asian Development Bank during the recent annual meeting in India.

The ADB-supported framework calls for the provision of cross-border transport and other physical infrastructure and software; trade and investment cooperation among member-countries; regional, monetary and financial collaboration, and cooperation for regional public benefit in areas such as combating health hazards.

Although 55 percent of Asian trade was now intra-regional, Watts said Asia must further diversify trade flows away from the United States.

Although the shift toward a monetary union was a tall order as what had happened in the European experience, Watts supported the ADB's plan to work on an index or indices of Asian currencies that would make it easier to track the movement of these currencies against each other.

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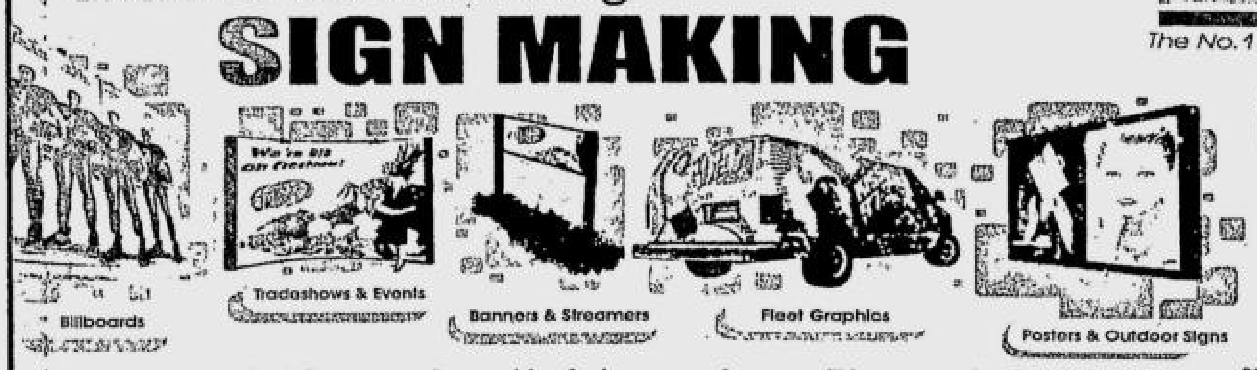

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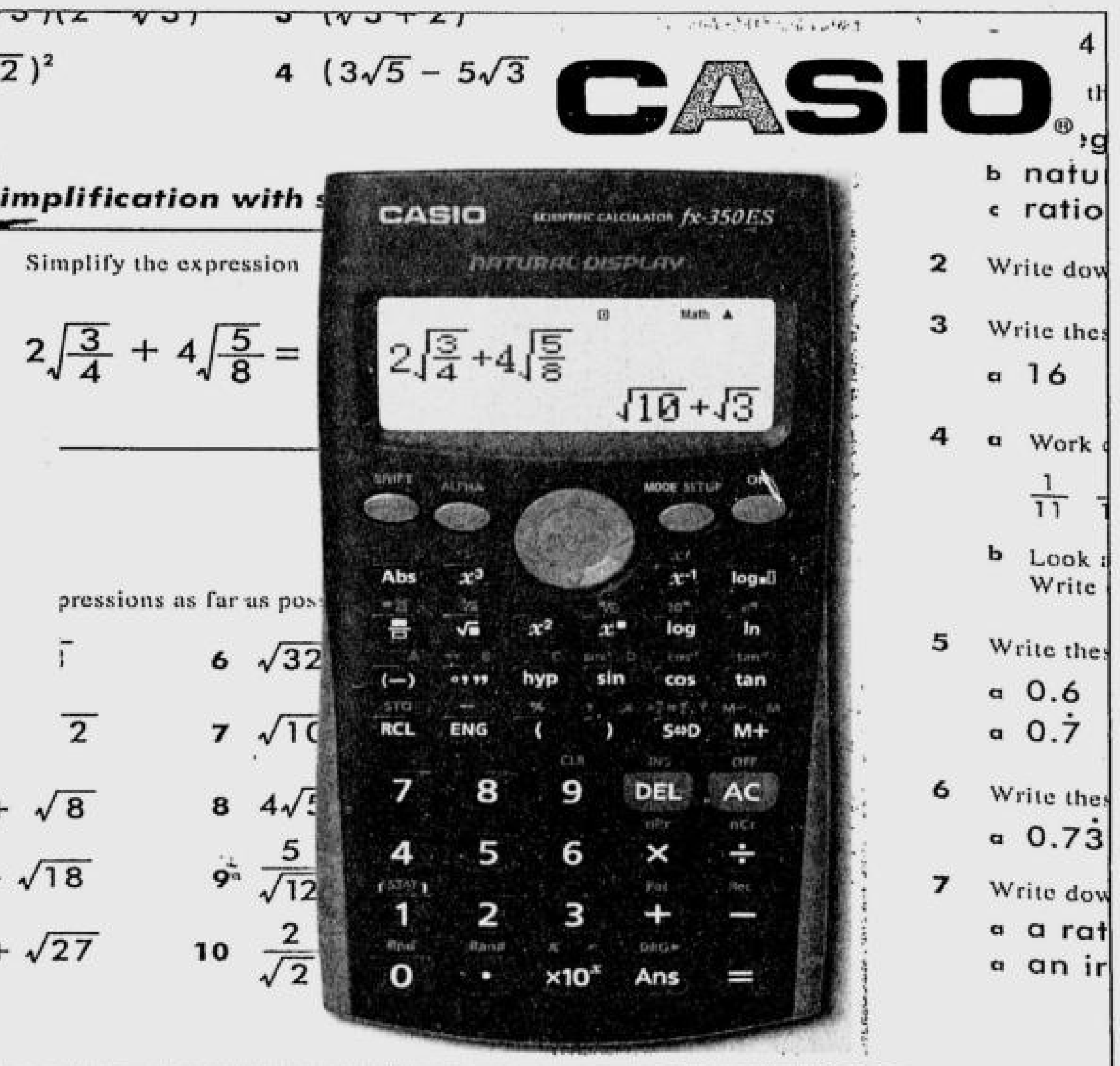
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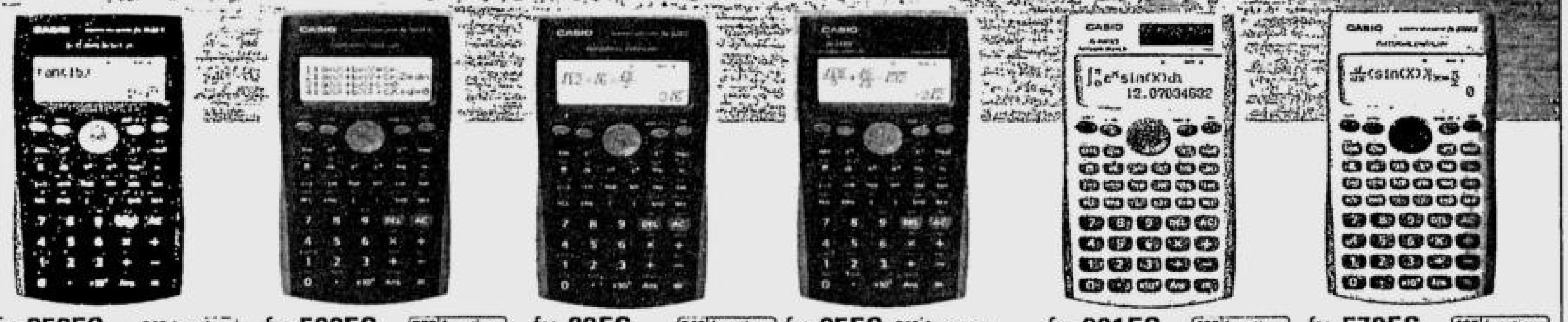

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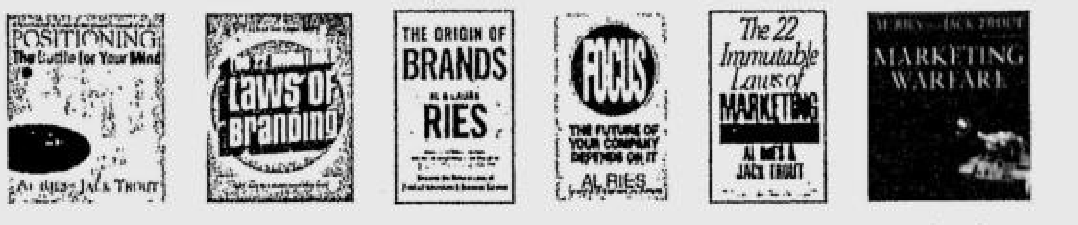
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Hike in interest rates bane on economy, BSP study says

Rise in reserve requirement to reduce GDP

By Doris C. Dumlao

A HIKE IN KEY OVERNIGHT INTEREST rates by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas will have the biggest dampening effect on the domestic economy over the long term, according to an internal BSP study.

For every 25 basis point increase in overnight or reverse repurchase rate, the study said the country's gross domestic product would be reduced by at least P35.3 million a quarter for the next 12 months and P85.5 million a quarter over the next 24 months.

Overnight rates refer to the interest charged on money that banks borrow from each other, usually to meet reserve requirements.

"A hike in the RRP rate, compared to other changes in reserve requirement and open market operations, reduces quarterly GDP by the largest magnitude in 24 months," it added.

The new study reviewed recently by the Monetary Board also said that an increase in the reserve requirement on banks over the next 12 months would cause the biggest reduction in the country's gross domestic product.

A hike in reserve requirements would mean that the banks will keep more of its cash resources in its vaults, rather than lend it to borrowers or invested in securities.

"In terms of impact on GDP, a one-percentage point increase in reserve requirement leads to the greatest amount of reduction in quarterly GDP levels over periods of three and 12 months," the BSP study said.

There were three monetary management tools cited in the study: The overnight borrowing or reverse repurchase (RRP) rate, reserve requirement and outright sale of securities.

Based on the study, the outright sale of securities by the BSP would be the least costly for the economy.

The study was conducted on the heels of a regional selldown on emerging market portfolio assets on expectations of further increases in interest rates by the US Federal Reserve.

The increase in the reserve requirement is seen slowing down domestic output by P800,000 each quarter in three succeeding months, but the impact would rise to P42.1 million a quarter over the next 12 months and P66.6 million a quarter over the next 24 months.

On the other hand, the issuance of P1 billion worth of securities to siphon off liquidity, was seen reducing GDP by P2.8 million a quarter over the next 12 months and P4.5 million a quarter over the next 24 months.

In terms of tempering inflation, an increase in the reserve requirement would have the biggest immediate impact of nearly 0.1-percentage point reduction over a three-month period, the study noted.

"However, over a period of one year, a 25-basis point increase in the RRP rate takes precedence over changes in reserve requirement and open market operations," it said.

Overall, a reduction in interest rates would make savings less attractive and borrowing more attractive instead, stimulating spending.

It can also boost the prices of assets such as shares and houses.

But changes in interest rates can also affect the exchange rate.

"An unexpected rise in the rate of interest in the Philippines relative to other countries would give investors a higher return on Philippine assets relative to their foreign currency equivalents, tending to make peso-denominated assets more attractive," the study explained.

"That should raise the value of the peso, reduce the price of imports, and reduce demand for Philippine goods and services abroad," it said.

But the study also said that the impact of interest rates on the exchange rate was "seldom that predictable."

The BSP had recently warned that local bond rates had fallen too low relative to foreign issues.

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Aboitiz group's Unionbank moves closer to taking over iBank assets

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

UNION BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES is moving closer to taking over International Exchange Bank as it expects to finish its due diligence by June 5.

Unionbank president Victor Valdepeñas made the assessment after the bank's stockholders' meeting late Friday.

UnionBank earlier signed a memorandum of agreement with iBank shareholders JTKC Equities Inc., IVantage Corp., Razon Industries Inc., and Greenhillls Property Ventures to acquire their combined 67-percent stake in the company.

UnionBank chair Justo Ortiz said earlier that he sees no hitches in the proposed merger with iBank.

Ortiz had said minority shareholders could no longer make a counter-offer as the majority shareholders have already agreed to sell their stake to UnionBank.

"We just have to deal with the rest of the shareholders either through individual agreements or a tender offer but the agreement is binding," Ortiz said.

"Those who will not accept a cash offer at P42.50 will just have to accept a share swap which will be the consequence of the merger," he added.

iBank president Ramon Sy, meanwhile, who was not among those who signed the MOA, owns around 3 percent.

UnionBank director Erramon Aboitiz, meanwhile, said a merger with iBank was a "perfect fit."

"We think it's a good bank with good people running it. It's a perfect fit in terms of culture and philosophy," Aboitiz told INQUIRER.

UnionBank will be the surviving entity of the merger, which will make UnionBank the 7th largest bank in asset size and branch network and the 8th largest in deposits.

UnionBank currently runs 111 branches, while iBank has 80.

Ortiz admitted that UnionBank was behind its goal to be the third largest bank by 2010.

"So we have to fast track things," he said, adding that UnionBank is still open to new acquisitions.

Acquisition of 67 percent in iBank would require roughly P9 billion.

"Capital raising is a possibility but there is nothing in the books. It depends on the opportunities," Valdepeñas said.

He also said UnionBank aims to grow its net profit this year by 5 to 10 percent from 2005, driven by both interest and non-interest income.

Mirant ups profit in Q1

By Abigail L. Ho

ATLANTA-BASED MIRANT CORP., parent firm of the country's largest independent power producer Mirant Philippines Corp., registered a huge net income jump in the first quarter to $467 million from only $11 million in the same period last year.

Adjusted net income, on the other hand, was placed at $142 million. This excluded unrealized mark-to-market gains of $298 million, plus other nonrecurring charges, mainly a $40-million gain on the sale of assets.

Adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization, a measure of cash flow, reached $340 million in the first three months of the year.

This $173-million jump in adjusted Ebitda, as compared with the January-March period in 2005, was attributed mainly to higher realized margins from hedging activities by the company's business in the United States.

"Our hedging strategy has been effective. We are substantially hedged for the year, which has produced more predictable financial results mitigating milder weather experienced across much of the US during the quarter," Mirant chair and chief executive Edward Muller said.

Operating cash flow was pegged at $500 million, an amount already adjusted for bankruptcy payments.

As of end-March, Mirant had cash and cash equivalents of $1.73 billion.

Mirant Philippines chair, president and chief executive Jose Leviste Jr. said Mirant's strong performance would also provide a huge boost to the company's business in the Philippines.

"These are very good numbers posted by our parent company. This motivates the Philippine business unit to work more effectively and efficiently to meet our goals for our stakeholders and targets for the year," he said in a statement over the weekend.

Mirant Philippines accounts for about 40 percent of its parent firm's Ebitda.

The IPP owns and operates some of the biggest power plants in the country, including the 1,200-MW Sual coal-fired plant in Pangasinan and the 700-MW Pagbilao coal-fired generation facility in Quezon.

It also has a stake in the 1,200-MW Ilijan gas-fired power plant in Batangas.

Mirant's total capacity in the country now stands at 2,200 MW.

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Mindanao wants to be known as halal center of RP

ZAMBOANGA CITY—EVEN THE FINANCE sector wants Mindanao declared the country's capital for halal food and processed consumer products.

Halal pertains to foods or goods prepared in accordance with Islamic laws. Muslims do not eat food or use products laced with pork or anything perceived as unclean.

Myle Johann Amsid, corporate sales manager for Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), said the bank was eager to know when Mindanao would be considered the country's halal center.

"We want to know what are the implementing guidelines or rules for Mindanao to be a halal center," Amsid said.

Amsid said the income from halal products produced in Mindanao could be as high as $20 billion a year.

The government eyes Middle East countries and other areas where there are sizeable Muslim population for halal products produced in Mindanao.

"We are expecting to gain $20 billion from the world market," he said.

Amsid, also chair of the Mindanao Business secretariat, said the business sector has discussed the need for the declaration of Mindanao as the country's halal capital.

He said another meeting, which would involve chief executives and finance officers of various corporations, rural banks, aquamarine and agricultural firms, would be held here on June 9.

Bangko Sentral Gov. Amando Tetangco was expected to attend the meeting, which was also aimed at pushing the so-called Mindanao Business Agenda.

"After the series of conferences, all actionable issues such as information technology, rubber and coconut, seaweeds, canning and shipping will be integrated and incorporated into a package dubbed as the Mindanao Business Agenda," Amsid said. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Unilever to tap halal mart

Mayonnaise may soon be sold to Malaysia

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FOOD AND PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS maker Unilever Philippines Inc. is set on tapping the multibillion-dollar-yearly halal market through its mayonnaise products.

"We are very keen on halal and we hope to find a solution and be able to start by next year," said Unilever chief executive Howard D. Belton.

Belton said, however, that the cost of factory adjustments was one of the main reasons why the company was taking its time on the matter.

"We need about P10-million production line that would be isolated (from elements that would make the product not acceptable to the Muslim market)," Belton said. "But going into that is not just a simple issue of cost."

Halal is an Arabic word generally translated as "permissible" and, in relation to consumables, refer to products that Muslims are allowed to use, eat and drink in the observance of Islam.

Unilever sells a product line of mayonnaise that comes in tuna, chicken and ham flavors—the latter prohibited among Muslims.

The global halal food industry is said to account for about $150 billion in revenues a year.

Belton said the immediate market for Unilever's halal mayonnaise would be Malaysia, where the firm is already exporting its other products.

"That would be a wiser move than going into the Indonesian market where we are less established and where competition (would pose greater challenges)," Belton added.

In a separate interview, Abdul Rahman RT Linzag, president of the Islamic Da'wah Council of the Philippines (IDCP), said ketchup maker Heinz UFC Philippines was also interested in having its products certified as halal.

IDCP is so far the only halal-certifying body in the country recognized by concerned international agencies such as the Jakarta-based World Halal Council.

Linzag said both Unilever and Heinz began talks with IDCP in 2005 to know more about the requirements of halal certification.

"(Unilever officials told us that) if it is successful with mayonnaise, the firm would consider having its other food products halal-certified," Linzag said.

Further, he said that even certain segments in non-Muslim markets in Japan and Europe wanted halal foods because to these consumers, halal means high quality in terms of food preparation and nutritional value.

Chinese firms looking for land in Mindanao

By Christine A. Gaylican

A GROUP OF CHINESE INVESTORS is keen on developing some 4,500 hectares of land in Zamboanga Sibugay in Mindanao, which will entail some P5.4 billion in investments, an industry official said.

Basilisa Ho, chair of the Philippine Rubber Industry Association, said Chinese investors were looking at land suitable for growing rubber as China strives to meet its growing demand for natural rubber.

Now the world's biggest rubber consumer, China imports one million metric tons (MT) of natural rubber a year for the manufacture of motor vehicle tires, shoes, disposable surgical and industrial gloves, she said.

She, however, refused to divulge the name of the Chinese companies until agreements have been signed.

Industry estimates showed that investments in growing rubber range from P90,000 to P120,000 a hectare.

Zamboanga Sibugay is home to the second oldest rubber plantation in the Philippines, the oldest being in Menzi, Isabela.

There are 2,000 hectares of reforested land planted to around 34,000 rubber trees in Zamboanga Sibugay, easily overtaking the 17,000 and 29,000 trees produced in Cotabato and Basilan, respectively.

"Investments in rubber are well compensated because the world price of raw rubber sap had jumped more than 300 percent to an average of $1,600 per metric ton from $380 last year," said Onofre Grino, president of the Menzi Agricultural Corp.—one of the remaining rubber plantations in the country.

This has prompted farmers to produce more of the commodity this year, he said.

The Philippines is the 12th largest rubber producer in the world.

Of the 60,000 metric tons of rubber produced last year, 40,000 metric tons went to the export market. according to the Department of Agriculture.

The leading markets for Philippine rubber are China, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore.

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1 lot Supply and Delivery of Security Appliance	P2,860,448.16	June 8, 2006 1:00 pm	June 21, 2006 1:00 PM	P1,500.00
1 lot Supply, Delivery and Installation of Firewall System (Clustered Solution)	P3,250,000.00	June 8, 2006 1:00 pm	June 21, 2006 1:00 PM	P1,700.00

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The Pre-Bid Conference shall be held at GSD Conference Room, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, 1598 M. H. del Pilar St., Malate, Manila.

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals in three separate sealed envelopes in the bid box located at the abovementioned address.

For more information, please call the LBP-Requisitions Management Division at telephone nos 551-2200 locals 2452, 2453, 7233 & 7234.

LANDBANK reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI-May 29 & June 5, 2006)

Trans Co

Republic of the Philippines
National Transmission Corporation
South Luzon Operations and Maintenance

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Replacement of 19.26 km. Corroded Overhead Ground Wire along Malaya-Kalayaan 230 kV Transmission Line 1 & 2 (From Tower No. 26-64, Tower No. 77-88) (38.532 circuit km.)

The proposed project is located in Laguna Province with an estimated length of 38.532 circuit kilometers. The work contemplated to be done by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all superintendence, labor, materials, supplies, tools, and equipment and other incidentals necessary for the complete replacement of corroded overhead ground wire including line hardwares in accordance with the requirements of the Plans and Specifications.

[TRANS-06-ROHGWMK-EG-05]

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM***, through the *Internal Cash Generation (ICG)* intends to apply the sum of *One Million Seven Hundred Ninety Four Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Nine & 94/100 (Php1,794,769.94)* being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for *Replacement of 19.26 km. Overhead Ground Wire along Malaya-Kalayaan 230 kV Transmission Line 1 & 2 (From Tower No. 26-64, Tower No. 77-88) (38.532 circuit km.)*. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** now invites potential Bidders to submit Letter of Intent (LOI) and apply for eligibility for *the Replacement of 19.26 km. Corroded Overhead Ground Wire along Malaya-Kalayaan 230 kV Transmission Line 1 & 2 (from Tower no. 26-64, Tower No. 77-88)*. Bidders should possess a valid ***PCAB License*** with ***License Particular of at least: "Category D & C, Specialties"*** and ***Registration Particular of at least: "Small B, Electrical Works" (Power Transmission & Distribution)***, respectively, have completed a single contract similar to the contract to be bid involving installation/construction of transmission lines rated 69 kV and above. The value of which should be at least 50% of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the eligibility documents. Applications for eligibity will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for submission of eligibility documents shall be on the same date of the opening of Eligibility documents. ***June 09, 2006, 9:00 A.M*** at the address mentioned in the next succeeding paragraphs. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Document. Completion of the works is required by ***60 working days.***

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with IRR Part A of R.A 9184, only bids from Bidders who passed the eligibity check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification

Interested Bidders shall secure the Eligibility documents from the BAC Secretariat at the address stated below, starting ***May 22-June 08, 2006 from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M*** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of *Php1,000.00*. They shall submit their accomplished Eligibility documents on or before ***June 09, 2006, 9:00 A.M.*** at the stated address. Eligibility Screening shall be held on ***June 09, 2006, 9:00 A. M.*** at the OAVP Conference Room B of the stated address

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** *Regional Contracts Management Office (RCMO)* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from ***8:00 A.M.*** to ***5:00 P.M.*** on ***June 28-30, 2006.***

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee ***Php5,000.00*** The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative starting ***June 28-30, 2006, 8:00 A.M.- 5:00 P.M.***

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on ***July 07, 2006, 9:30 A.M.*** at the OAVP Conference Room Transco, SLOM San Vicente Biñan, Laguna

Deadline for submission of bids is on ***July 10, 2006, 9:30 A. M*** at the address below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the prescribed form indicated under Section 27.2 of R. A. 9184. Bid opening shall be on the same date ***July 19, 2006, 9:30 A.M*** at the ***OAVP Conference Room B of Transco SLOM.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation – South Luzon Operations & Maintenance
Regional Contracts Managembnt Office (RCMO)
San Vicente Biñan, Laguna 4024
Mr. Ruben G. Castuera – BAC Chairman
(02) 981-4576 to78 local 4094; 4080; 4053
rgcastuera@transco.ph
(02) 981-4576 to 78 local 4007
www.transco.ph

(SGD). RUBEN G. CASTUERA
BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 21 & 29, 2006)

Trans Co

Republic of the Philippines
National Transmission Corporation
South Luzon Operations and Maintenance

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Rehabilitation of 52BS4 Batangas-Bolbok-CIP 69 kV Transmission Line (Phase 1)

The proposed project is located in Batangas Province, South Region. The work contemplated to be done by the successful bidder shall consist of furnishing all superintendence, labor, materials, supplies, tools and equipment and other incidentals necessary for the complete replacement/rehabilitation of existing 69 kV wood pole transmission line structures with direct burial steel pole structures including dressing, grounding, overhead ground wires and guying and anchor assembly in accordance with the requirements of the plans and specifications.

[TRANS-04-R52BS4BBCIP-EG-10-PB2]

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM***, through the *Internal Cash Generation (ICG)* intends to apply the sum of *Fifteen Million Five Hundred Seventy Four Thousand Eight Hundred Nineteen & 28/100 (Php15,574,819.28)* being the Approved Budget for Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for *Rehabilitation of 52BS4 Batangas-Bolbok-CIP 69 kV Transmission Line (Phase 1)*. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** now invites potential Bidders to submit Letter of Intent (LOI) and apply for eligibility for *the rehabilitation of 52BS4 BBCIP 69 kV Transmission Line*. Bidders should possess a valid ***PCAB license*** with ***License Particular of at least: "Category B, Specialties"*** and ***Registration Particular of at least: "Medium A, Electrical Works" (Power Transmission & Distribution)***, respectively, have completed a single contract similar to the contract to be bid involving supply and installation of steel poles rated 69 kV and above. The value of which should be at least 50% of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the eligibility documents. Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. The last day for submission of eligibility documents shall be on the same date of the opening of Eligibility documents: ***June 08, 2006, 9:00 A.M***. at the address mentioned in the next succeeding paragraphs. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Document. Completion of the works is required by ***80 working days.***

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with IRR Part A of R.A 9184, only bids from Bidders who passed the eligibility check will be opened. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine its responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during post-qualification.

Interested Bidders shall secure the Eligibility documents from the BAC Secretariat at the address stated below, starting ***May 22-June 07, 2006 from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M*** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of *Php1,500.00*. They shall submit their accomplished Eligibility documents on or before ***June 08, 2006, 9:00 A.M.*** at the stated address. Eligibility Screening shall be held on ***June 08, 2006, 9:00 A. M*** at the OAVP Conference Room B of the stated address

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** *Regional Contracts Management Office (RCMO)* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from ***8:00 A.M.*** to ***5:00 P.M.*** on ***June 28-30, 2006.***

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Bidders that passed the eligibility check upon the presentation of the Notice of Eligibility to the BAC Secretariat, at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee ***Php7,000.00***. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the bidder or his authorized representative starting ***June 28-30, 2006, 8:00 A.M.- 5:00 P.M.***

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on ***July 06, 2006, 9:30 A.M.*** at the OAVP Conference Room Transco, SLOM San Vicente Biñan, Laguna

Deadline for submission of bids is on ***July 18, 2006, 9:30 A. M*** at the address below. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the prescribed form indicated under Section 27.2 of R. A. 9184. Bid opening shall be on the same date, ***July 18, 2006, 9:30 A.M*** at the ***OAVP Conference Room B of Transco SLOM.*** Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.

The ***NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION-SLOM*** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation – South Luzon Operations & Maintenance
Regional Contracts Management Office (RCMO)
San Vicente Biñan, Laguna 4024
Mr. Ruben G. Castuera – BAC Chairman
(02) 981-4576 to78 local 4094; 4086, 4053
rgcastuera@transco.ph
(02) 981-4576 to 78 local 4007
www.transco.ph.

(SGD). RUBEN G. CASTUERA
BAC Chairman

(PDI-May 21 & 29, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) is hereby inviting prospective bidders to submit their Letter of Intent to participate in the upcoming procurement of Civil Works Contractors and Equipment Suppliers for the Laguindingan Airport Development Project (LADP).

The project scope may include but not limited to: (i) Construction of new runway and taxiway, (ii) construction of new apron and other airside civil works, (iii) construction of new passenger terminal building and other landside civil works and (iv) provision of new air navigational and other airport equipment.

The bidding procedure shall be in accordance with the International Competitive Bidding stated in the Guidelines for Procurement under the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) Loan. The bidding will commence after the updating of project cost and re-engagement of consulting services.

Submission of Letter of Intent shall not be later than **15 June 2006** addressed to The Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee for Foreign-Assisted Projects, DOTC at Unit 61, 6th Floor, The Columbia Tower, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) **ROBERT R. CASTAÑARES**
BAC Chairman

(PDI - May 22, 29 and June 05, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Transportation and Communications
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO SUBMIT LETTER OF INTENT

The Department of Transportation and Communications is hereby inviting prospective bidders/challengers to submit their Letter of Intent for the "Swiss Challenge" of the proposal to Finance, Design, Construct, Operate and Maintain the planned 23-km MRT Line 7 Project (EDSA/North Avenue, Quezon City to San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan) including its 22-km. road access component (NLEX Bocaue Exit to San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan) submitted by Universal LRT Corporation (BVI) Ltd., the original proponent of the project, through the Unsolicited Build, Gradual Transfer, Operate and Maintain Scheme, a variant of the Build, Operate and Transfer (BOT) mode.

The proposed bidding shall be governed by the BOT Law (R.A. No. 7718) and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Submission of Letter of Intent shall not be later than 15 June 2006 addressed to The Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee, DOTC at Unit 61, 6th Floor, The Columbia Tower, Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) **ROBERT R. CASTAÑARES**
BAC Chairman

(PDI-May 23, 29 & June 5, 2006)

CURE told to roll out its own 3G network

By Daxim L. Lucas

STARTUP MOBILE PHONE FIRM CONNECTivity Unlimited Resources Enterprise Inc. (CURE) must first roll out its own third-generation (3G) network in line with its commitment to regulators before it can hope to ride on the infrastructure of its competitors, according to regulators.

The statement was made by National Telecomunications Commission (NTC) Commissioner Ronald O. Solis last week, in reaction to CURE's plan to piggyback on the 3G network infrastructure of industry giants Smart Telecommunications Inc. and Globe Telecom Inc.

In an interview with reporters, Solis said that while the 3G guidelines issued by the NTC allows for the so-called "co-location" of facilities, CURE must first show its commitment to the business by setting up its initial telecommunications infrastructure.

"The concept of co-location is only for [geographic] areas where it does not make sense to have a duplication of facilities," he said.

Solis envisions such sites to be provincial or rural areas with relatively light 3G communication traffic, such that they would not warrant large investments in multiple base stations to service a limited market.

"In that case, the companies can co-locate," he said, adding that it will be up to the telecommunications firms to discuss among themselves the prices that they would charge competitors for the "rental" of the 3G infrastructure.

So far, Smart and Globe have begun an aggressive rollout program aimed at dominating the local 3G market.

However, Gokongwei-owned Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc. and CURE—owned by former Trade Minister Roberto V. Ongpin—are taking their time in implementing their own 3G programs, preferring to watch from the sidelines as their competitors take the lead.

Earlier, CURE president Eric O. Recto said the company's plan called for co-location of facilities with its competitors as part of its business strategy.

The NTC chief said he saw nothing wrong with the plan, as long as the company doesn't rely too heavily on this model.

"If you're able to show the NTC that you're compliant [with the 3G rollout plan], we'll even help initiate the network sharing among the companies," Solis said.

For his part, Recto assured the NTC that CURE is on schedule to meet its commitments with the telecommunications regulator.

"We intend to roll out, based on the schedule we submitted to them," he said. "We are in the middle of our tendering process for the first phase of our roll out."

CURE has long been rumored to be allying itself with Hong Kong-based telecommunications powerhouse Hutchison Whampoa for its "pure 3G" business model, although it has yet to make a formal announcement on this matter.

The commission is set to examine the businesses of Smart, Globe, Digitel and CURE to evaluate their compliance with the terms and conditions set out when their licenses were awarded late last year.

PLDT seeks . . .

From page B7

to, Isberto said.

In one proposed economy package, for example, the basic fixed line voice service monthly fee would be set at P300 for residential subscribers. This basic monthly fee remains subject to the currency exchange rate adjustment, or CERA, mechanism.

Subscribers who wish to avail of these economy plans will be levied an incremental P5 per call surcharge for domestic and international long distance calls based on existing per minute rates.

Also, subscribers to the economy plan would not be qualified to enroll in the existing P10 per call unlimited PLDT-PLDT NDD offer or other discounted rates being offered by PLDT.

For economy plan customers who wish to subscribe to either PLDT Vibe Internet dial up service or PLDT DSL broadband Internet service, they will be charged an Internet access fee of P400 per month on top of the basic fixed line voice service fee.

In addition, the existing PLDT Vibe per minute rates or the applicable PLDT DSL monthly fees will be charged.

INVITATION TO BID FOR MANPOWER SERVICES

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. Company Profile - Minimum of (3) years of continuous experience with regional offices in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.
2. Audited financial statements in good financial standing for the last (3) years.
3. Government permits and licenses: DTI, SEC, DOLE

Above requirements must be submitted on or before ***June 2, 2006.***

A Pre-bid Conference shall be held for all qualified bidders at a date to be announced later.

Submit requirements and all inquiries to:
MR. NOEL TIRO
Design and Bidding Officer
8th Floor, UCPB Head Office Bldg., Makati Avenue, Makati City
Tel. No. 811-9912

UCPB
www.ucpb.com

TransCo
National Transmission Corporation
Republic of the Philippines

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF VARIOUS CABLES
PB060428-LE0073/PR NO. PM-EDC-06-000020433

1. The NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION, Head Office Region (TRANSCO-HO) through the 2006 Corporate Budget approved by the TransCo Board intends to apply the sum of ***PhP 10,710,979.20*** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for ***PB060428-LE0073/PR NO. PM-EDC-06-000020433, Supply and Delivery of Various Cables.*** Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening. Award shall be on a lot basis.
2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for ***Supply and Delivery of Various Cables.*** Delivery of the GOODS is required ***within sixty (60) calendar days from the receipt of the approved Purchase Order/Contract.*** The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine resposiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below from ***May 29, 2006 to June 20, 2006*** from ***9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.*** and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of ***Php 2,000.00.*** The method of payment will be ***Cash.*** The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The TRANSCO-HO will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **June 07, 2006 /3:30 P.M.** at the address below.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before ***June 21, 2006/10:00 A.M.*** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following forms and amount or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	One percent (1%) or P107,109.79
2. Bank guarantee	One and a half percent (1-1/2%) or P160,664.68
3. Surety bond	Two and a half percent (2-1/2%) or P267,774.48
4. Foreign government guarantee	One hundred percent (100%) or P10,710,979.20

7. Bid opening shall be on ***June 21, 2006/10:00 AM*** at the *Admin Conference Room same address below.* Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The ***National Transmission Corporation*** reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

National Transmission Corporation, Head Office Region
Mr. Armando N. Ochoa, BAC Chairman
MMD Office, G/F TransCo Main Bldg.
Power Center, Quezon Ave. corner BIR Road
Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. No. (632) 9812205/(632) 9812241
Fax No. (632) 9228432
Website: www.transco.ph

(Sgd.) ARMANDO N. OCHOA
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – May 29 & June 5, 2006)

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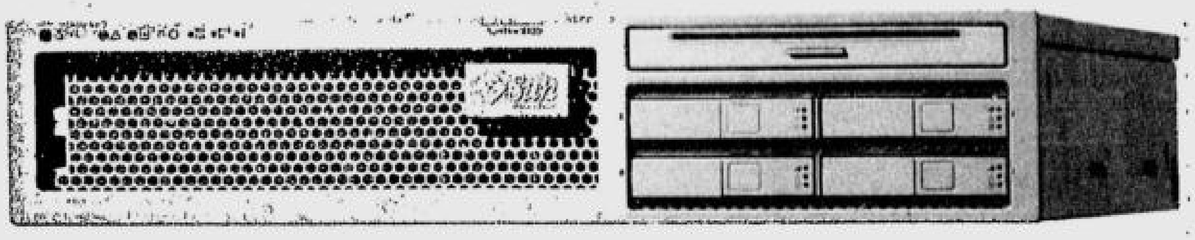

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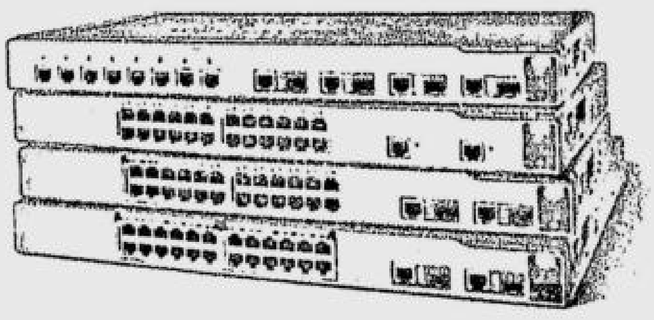

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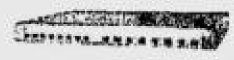

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Packaging firm defaults on debts, say banks

Steniel's creditors mulling over foreclosure of assets

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CREDITOR BANKS LED BY Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., Chinatrust Commercial Bank and Bank of the Philippine Islands have declared packaging firm Steniel Manufacturing Corp. (Steniel) "in default" of debts worth at least P690 million.

According to sources in the banking, the creditors are now reviewing their options, which may include foreclosing on Steniel's assets or going into negotiations to find other ways by which the company can repay its debts.

The INQUIRER last Friday tried to reach Steniel's office in Cavite but was told that there were no officials present at the time.

This development came about shortly after the company announced the management buyout of shares in its parent firm.

Steniel (Belgium) Holdings NV sold its 100 percent stake in Steniel (Netherlands) Holdings BV to certain directors and officers of the publicly listed firm.

Since Steniel Netherlands owns 82.3 percent of Steniel, the sale has in effect, placed the said ownership of Steniel into the hands of the local management, sources said.

Steniel Belgium is the holding company owned by Europe and Asia invested advisory firm CVC Capital Partners Asia Pacific LP and Asia Investors LLC.

Steniel however said in its disclosure that while the parties involved in the deal have signed a share purchase agreement, the shares of the Dutch holding firm have not been transferred to the buyers pending completion of various requirements.

Steniel told the Philippine Stock Exchange that Steniel Belgium's sale of shares was conducted in order to give directors and officers of the local firm more flexibility in the operations and management of the business.

Banking sources however said that the Belgian firm simply wanted out.

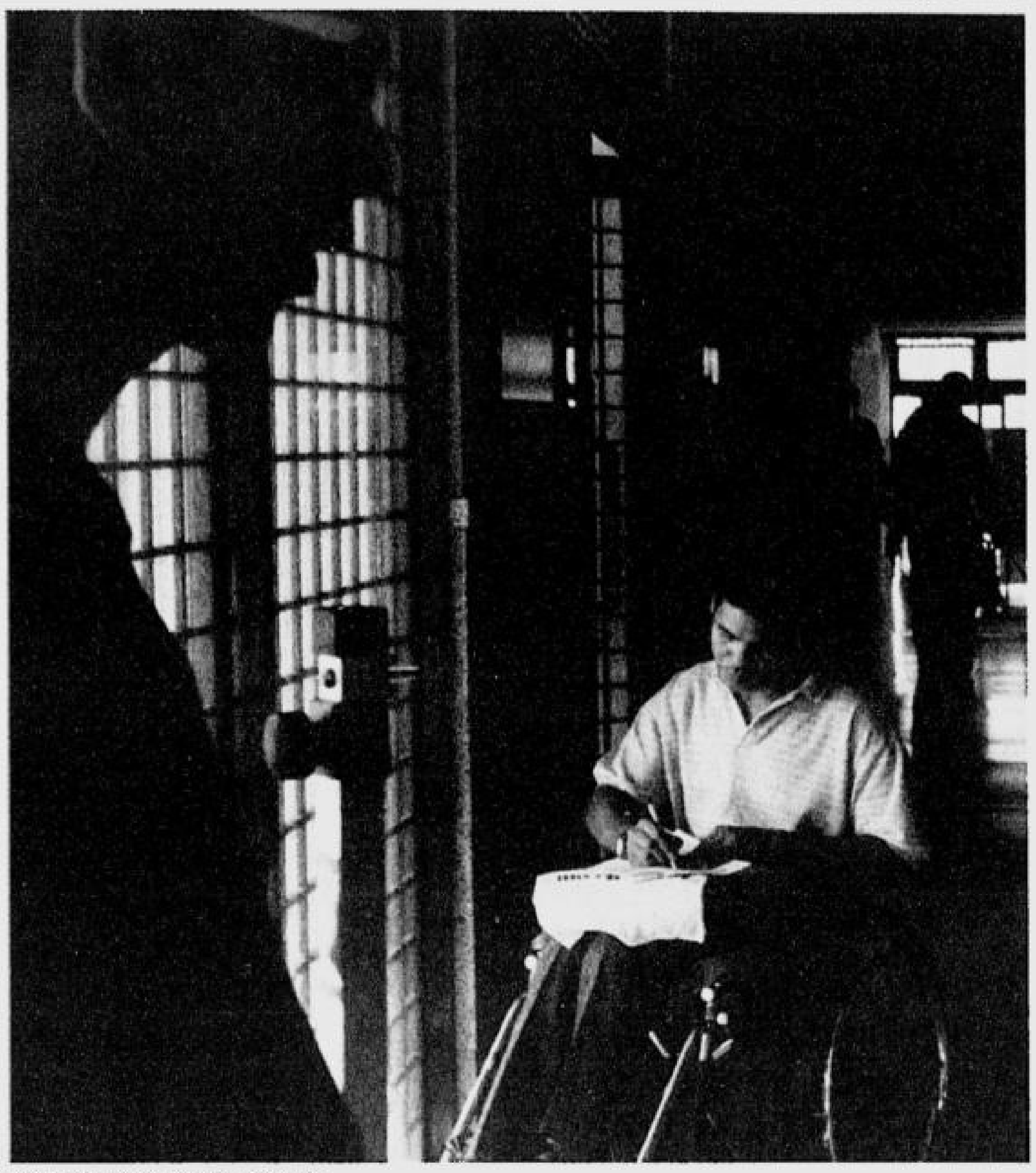
The sources also said that the announced deal shocked creditors since they received a formal offer in January from Steniel Belgium proposing to sell its shares to them.

The offer did not carry a deadline. Between January and May, creditors claimed they were looking for an investor to take over the shares, which they planned to purchase from Steniel Belgium.

Steniel has three manufacturing plants located in Cavite, Cebu and Davao. It manufactures paper products, paper board and corrugated carton containers.

Steniel technically has been in default for the last two years. But creditors said they tended to overlook this technicality since there had been discussions on how to settle the debts through a share purchase. Later, it was agreed that the firm would be turned over to an interested investor.

In October 2000, Metro Pacific Corp. and Philippine International Paper Corp. sold their combined 72.6 percent in Steniel to Steniel Netherlands.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The blind man on the left waits for his companion, paraplegic Enriquito Relagio, to finish filling up a job application form from his wheelchair. Relagio hopes to repair cellular phones someday. Persons with disabilities who are looking for work are provided pre-employment counseling, and livelihood seminars during a jobs fair at the Occupational Safety and Health Center in Quezon City. LYN RILLON

ADB scraps $200-M currency swap with RP

By Michelle V. Remo

THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT Bank said the proposed $200-million currency swap arrangement with the Philippine government would no longer push through after both parties failed to agree on the terms of the deal.

"There is no more currency swap deal," ADB country director Thomas Crouch told reporters. "The ADB has withdrawn the offer."

The currency swap arrangement, which was even approved by the central bank's Monetary Board, was proposed in 2004 supposedly to provide the government cheaper source of foreign currency, thus reducing the cost of paying the country's external debts.

Under the proposal, the ADB would issue dollar-denominated bonds, the proceeds from which would be swapped for pesos with the Philippine government.

The dollars were supposed to help beef up the government's foreign currency holdings at cheaper cost, while the pesos received by the ADB were intended for relending to domestic banks.

Crouch did not identify the terms of the deal that the ADB and the Philippine government failed to agree on, but officials from the Department of Finance earlier said they were hoping the ADB would lower the cost of the deal.

Authorities would not disclose the cost entailed in the proposed arrangement, but the DOF said the cost for the government would only be similar to commercial rates.

Negotiations over the terms of the agreement dragged on since 2004. Last week, ADB finally declared that the proposed swap arrangement was dead.

The currency swap deal between the Philippines and the ADB would have been the first for both parties. When discussions over the swap arrangement were still in their initial stages, the ADB had said it might establish similar deals with other countries.

Other lending firms, including the World Bank, were reported to have been monitoring the developments of the proposed currency swap arrangement for possible entry into similar deals.

But while the deal has already been canceled, Crouch said the ADB was willing to provide more official development assistance to the Philippines given the country's improving fiscal climate.

"[The government's] fiscal position is improving so things are looking brighter for [ADB] to be able to expand our engagement, he said.

The ADB is the country's second-biggest source of ODA, after the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

BOI grants tax perks to Smart's ₱33.18-B 3G project

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS has granted tax perks to telecommunications giant Smart Communications Inc. for its P33.18-billion third-generation cellular mobile phone project.

BOI had earlier approved the similar project of Globe Telecom, for which it intends to spend P5.48 billion.

According to the BOI, Smart's investment was given pioneer status due to the huge amounts involved.

A pioneer status means Smart is qualified for a six-year tax holiday, duty-free importation of capital goods and other fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

Smart plans to raise 81 percent of the required outlay from stockholder equity and the rest through borrowing.

The 3G project would create 107 new jobs and is expected to start commercial operations in July.

Based on the company's application, Smart expects its 3G subscriber base to grow steadily from half a million in the project's first year to 8.6 million by the sixth year.

In the same period, revenues are expected to grow from P900 million to P28.1 billion while capital expenditures, which would depend on actual subscriber take up, is seen to reach an average of P5.4 billion a year.

Smart plans to make available its 3G service starting with Metro Manila—especially the central business districts, airports, malls and hotels—and Cebu and Davao as well as popular tourist spots.

The service would then gradually reach out to capital cities and towns in the provinces and then to other cities and towns.

In January, the National Telecommunications Commission assigned Smart its desired 3G frequency bands that the firm said would help hasten its delivery of 3G services to the public.

3G technology and services would allow users to hear and see the party they are contacting—both here and abroad—watch television shows and enjoy faster Internet connection while mobile.

Company officials have said that frequency bands that they asked for—1920-1935 Megahertz and 2110-2125 MHz—had the least amount of interference and was located at the best position in the 3G frequency spectrum.

They said these would allow for the clearest possible over-the-air transmission.

Other companies preparing their 3G systems are Digital Telecommunications Philippines and Connectivity Unlimited Resource Enterprise.

By raising fees, PCA gets to hike income by ₱100M a year

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINE COCONUT AUTHORITY (PCA) has announced plans to increase its fees by six centavos per kilo which will, in effect, jack up its income by P100 million a year.

PCA Administrator Oscar Garin said that the fee would now be 12 centavos for every kilo of coconut oil exported. The proceeds would be used to augment the agency's funds.

"We obtained the go-signal from the Department of Finance to increase our fees by six centavos, so long as there is a program to be implemented for its utilization," Garin said.

He added that the PCA would conduct consultations with industry millers before implementing it.

Local oil millers—members of the United Coconut Association of the Philippines (Ucap) and the Philippine Coconut Oil Producers Association (Pcopa)—are questioning the fee increase at a time when a supply glut in the world market has pulled down coconut oil prices.

"We hope they should consider our present circumstances before they implement the fee hike," according to an industry official. "It would be untimely at this time."

The finance department favored the increase in PCA's fees, on condition that strict monitoring of the Department of Agriculture should be implemented.

According to letter from DOF Undersecretary Gil S. Beltran dated April 7, the fee increase would be allowed under certain conditions.

The DOF said that a program for the development of the Philippine coconut industry must be established and this should focus on the upgrading of small coconut farmers' entrepreneurial skills.

"There must be an approval by the DA of the PCA programs and desired outcomes to be funded by the 6-centavo increase," the DOF said.

The DOF also warned that there is a pending case before a Quezon City Regional Trial Court against the PCA filed by the Pcopa regarding the hike in PCA fees.

Transco concession bid set for September

By Abigail L. Ho

BIDDING FOR THE 25-YEAR NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) concession may finally take place in September, following two failed auctions in 2003 and a negotiated bid in 2004 which the government eventually scrapped.

According to the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), interested investors have until mid-July to submit their expressions of interest. The transaction documents for the auction are already available.

Only firms or groups that will pre-qualify will be allowed to participate in the actual bidding in September.

To pre-qualify, a potential bidder should have a member or affiliate with a net asset value or market capitalization of at least $500 million.

They also have to have a member or affiliate "with sufficient experience in operating and maintaining electricity transmission systems comparable to that of the Philippines, with at least 6,000 circuit kilometers and a minimum 5,000 megawatts peak demand and a voltage level of 115 kilovolts (kV) to 230 kV."

For interested foreign firms, they have to enter into partnerships with Filipino entities to enable them to comply with the 60-40 equity rule under the Constitution.

These potential foreign investors should have a net asset value or market capitalization of at least $175 million, and their Filipino partners should have $300 million.

"The $500-million market capitalization was set to optimize the Transco assets and to ensure the earnestness of investors interested in bidding for the transmission company, including its operation and maintenance," PSALM president Nieves Osorio said in a statement.

Apart from the technical and financial qualifications, interested bidders should also comply with the RA 9136, or Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, mandate that they should not have any interest in electricity generation, distribution or supply, whether directly or indirectly.

Osorio said the upcoming auction had a bigger chance of success than the past ones, due mainly to certain "significant developments."

She noted that there was greater regulatory certainty now, with the Energy Regulatory Commission's expected release of Transco's regulated asset base (RAB) on June 16.

The RAB will be the basis for Transco's annual maximum allowable revenue, which will determine the transmission wheeling rates, the main source of revenue for the Transco concessionaire.

In an earlier interview, Osorio said several foreign firms were eyeing the Transco concession, including a Canadian firm and some American firms.

"The British, who have left before, are now reconsidering," she said.

BSP sees end to disturbances in peso bond market

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE TURBULENCE IN THE LOCAL PEso bond market that has spooked retail investors of unit investment trust funds is now tapering off, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

BSP Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. ruled out proposals for the BSP to open a liquidity window for Philippine UITFs, which had been adversely affected by the global selldown on assets of emerging markets over the last three weeks.

"The market can very well take care of itself," Espenilla told reporters at the closing of the 45th ACI World Congress on Saturday. "What happened over the last few days was abnormal so it's expected that things would get back to normal."

Money market traders said intervention by the Bureau of Treasury, through the buyback of five-year and 10-year Treasury bonds, which were mostly the underlying assets of UITFs, had helped stabilize the markets. However, some traders warned of moral hazards arising from such intervention.

Espenilla also noted that the BSP likewise had enough monetary tools to ward off speculation, not just in the foreign exchange but in local bond interest rates as well.

"The exchange rate is the price of our currency expressed in foreign exchange terms," Espenilla said. "Interest is another price of our money expressed in time value.

"Our basic mandate is to maintain price stability. Under its normal mandate, if there's excess volatility in key price markets, the BSP has options to maintain order in the market."

The BSP has warned banks against overselling UITFs, or pooled trust funds in acceptable currencies operated by a trust entity.

Unlike the common trust funds, these funds are exempted from reserve requirement as they are independent from the bank proper.

They realistically reflect underlying market values.

"It's an option for the BSP as monetary authority to maintain financial stability and to use its open market tools to curb excess volatility in interest rates," Espenilla said.

However, Espenilla declined to say whether the BSP had actually exercised such option to buy back peso bonds over the last few days.

While government intervention had helped stabilize the local bond markets, some market players warned of the adverse impact of excessive interference.

"I'm very much against any form of intervention," International Exchange Bank treasurer Ed Bunyi said. "There's clear moral hazard in that."

"Imagine investors coming in (UITFs) and expecting they could be bailed out when things go wrong," Bunyi added. "Maybe [the government] ... shouldn't have allowed the interest rates to come down too low in the first place."

Across the region, recent dramatic moves have brought emerging market assets back to more attractive levels.

"The markets' correction has reined in some of the excesses—in metals, gold and emerging debt—and automatic stabilizers have kicked in, [in the form of] lower bond yields, weaker foreign exchange rates, which will cut external deficits," Amercian Express Bank said in a commentary sent on Saturday.

Amex said major markets had stabilized last week and the sell-offs seen were more of a technical correction rather than the beginning of a prolonged bear market.

"But the worries over the global environment which contributed to the sharp deterioration in global risk appetite in the past few weeks will not go away in a hurry," Amex said.

"The global upswing is also in mid-cycle stage, when capacity is tightening and macro news flow at the margin may deteriorate, or is less likely to surprise on the upside," Amex said. "Investors continuing to fret about growth, inflation and the dollar will keep volatility high."

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Department of Labor and Employment
National Wages and Productivity Commission
REGIONAL TRIPARTITE WAGES AND PRODUCTIVITY BOARD
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given that a public hearing on the matter of minimum wage adjustment in the National Capital Region is hereby set by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board – National Capital Region (RTWPB-NCR) on 21 June 2006, 1:00 p.m., at the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC), OSHC Complex, North Avenue cor. Science Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

All interested parties who wish to present their position/opposition on the matter are hereby enjoined to attend the public hearing and may file their position papers with the Board on or before the scheduled date of hearing at the RTWPB-NCR Secretariat, Room 11-C, 11th Floor, G.E. Antonino Building, cor. T.M. Kalaw & J. Bocobo Streets, Ermita, Manila; or send through telefax number 527-51-55 or at email address: wage_ncr@yahoo.com

(SGD.) RICARDO S. MARTINEZ SR., CESO III
Regional Board Chairman

(PDI – May 29, 2006)

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OBITUARIES

Our Dearly Beloved

Sisenando "Andoy" Rivera Dimaliwat

*Peacefully joined our Lord and his wife **Candelaria G. Dimaliwat** on May 26, 2006 at the age of 78.*

His children **Bernardo** and **Eufelia**, **Roberto** and **Noemi Celerina**, **Edgardo** and **Mary Rose**, **Belinda** and **Arsenio**, **Renato** and **Irene**; sister **Ma. Socorro** and grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Narra Chapel, La Funeraria Paz-Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park) Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, May 31, 2006
at 9:00 AM at the Manila Memorial Park,
Sucat, Parañaque.

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life. No one comes to
the Father
except through Me.
John 14:6

Cresencia Pamintuan-Rolda

September 17, 1922 – May 26, 2006
Died in the grace of the Lord on May 26, 2006 at 8:40 p.m. at Unciano Medical Hospital, Antipolo

Her bereaved children **Rodrigo & Realidad Santico**, **Diana Maria**, **Ana Maria and Elizabeth** and **Victor de los Santos**; her niece: **Angelina Walo**, nephews: **Conrado and Bernardo Reyes**; her grandchildren **Luisito (†)**, **Pag-asa Landas**, **Buhay Landas**, **Ani Umaga** and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapel L in Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will be on Tuesday, May 30, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. at Manila Memorial Park – Parañaque after the 1:00 p.m. funeral mass at the Loyola Memorial Chapels in Guadalupe.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.
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● Any identification document (I.D.)

OBITUARIES

RUFINO CO

Passed away peacefully in the Grace of our Lord on May 26, 2006 at the age of 77.

*His loving wife **Tsai Siu Luen**, children **Liong Seng, Juanito, Conchita, Margaret, Rosaline**, Daughters-in-law **Julie Tan, Deborah Tsang**, Sons-in-law **Johnston Ngo (†), Tun Chung Ng, Philemon Ty**; grandchildren; brother & sisters; nephew & nieces, relatives and friends request to join them in prayer for the eternal repose of his soul.*

His remains will lie in state at the Funeraria Paz-Manila, Chapel 5.

Interment will be on May 31, 2006 at 9:00 am. Cremation will follow at the Chinese Cemetery.

People, Events & Products

Volvo rolls on to Cebu

PASAJERO MOTORS CORP (PAMOcor) formally launched Volvo Cebu when it opened its showroom doors last April 21, in Mandaue City. The whole-day affair opened with the official inauguration and blessing in the morning followed by the symbolic ribbon-cutting ceremony officiated by Hon. Governor Gwendolyn Garcia. Volvo Car Asia Pacific regional business director Jack Zaal, along with Volvo Manila officers lent their support to the new addition in the Volvo stable. Among the guests of honor are Cebu Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Mandaue City Councilor Glen Bercede.

To celebrate the entrance of Volvo in the region, guests enjoyed a night of pure energy and exhilaration at the Surprisingly Volvo event. The celebration revolved around the fresh new look and outlook of Volvos. Gone were the boxy edges and instead replaced by sleek lines and even sexier curves of the Swedish automotive fleet. Spearheading the pack is three of the most vibrant models available: the nimble Volvo S40 compact sedan, the robust Volvo XC70 Cross Country, and the award-winning Volvo SUV, the XC90. These models pack a mighty punch with varying degrees of horsepower that leave other cars in the dust. These spirited Volvos spelled out style and substance when they entered the limelight with three of Cebu's most driven personalities: maverick entrepreneur Francis Llaban, Zee columnist Leigh Carcel and sportsman Glen Soco.

Pamocor, in the automotive business for 22 years, is renowned for its creative innovation - the Pasajero Jeepney. The company's vision to be one of the top automotive manufacturers in the country has inspired the people behind the corporation to work together and pool their ideas to build a company that creates a customer-oriented product. Backed by a reliable partnership with the sole distributor and authorized dealer of Volvo cars in the Philippines, Viking Cars, Incorporated, Pamocor has now ventured further to provide for the needs of the burgeoning premium car market in Cebu and other nearby cities, and makes available to the market one of the world's most safe and dynamic cars -- Volvo.

The new Volvo Cebu showroom exudes the quality one would expect from a premium car manufacturer. One can witness Volvo's unique Scandinavian heritage, evident in every design detail from the light, bright open areas, with white as the dominant color, to the natural warmth created through the use of lightwood. The showroom reflects beautiful functionality central to the Volvo design philosophy. Nothing is lavish or excessive, but confident, understated and considered. Ultimately, Volvo creates an environment that is as relaxing and rewarding as behind the wheel of their cars. The experience inside Volvo Cebu features a line-up of cars that create space to give people an insight into each model's distinct character.

A lot more is in store for Cebu and other neighboring regions as Volvo rolls on to bring automotive excellence and customer service in this part of the country. Along with other offerings such as the pre-owned and accessory facilities, Volvo buyers have more options to enjoy their decision to purchase a Volvo. With the support of the Volvo Manila office, the official distributor of Volvo cars in the Philippines, Viking Cars Inc (VCI) expresses confidence in Pamocor that with its usual dedication to excellence, it will thus push forward and strengthen the Volvo brand in the Queen City of the South.

In Manila, Viking Cars Inc is the official distributor of Volvo cars. Volvo Cebu is located at A.S. Fortuna Street, Banilad, Mandaue City. The 2006 Volvo-automobile line includes the compact All-New S40 and V50 Sportswagon, sporty S60, the flagship S80 luxury sedan, the rugged XC70 Cross Country and the award-winning XC90 AWD. For details and inquiries, please call (032) 346-3322 or 0916-6873657.

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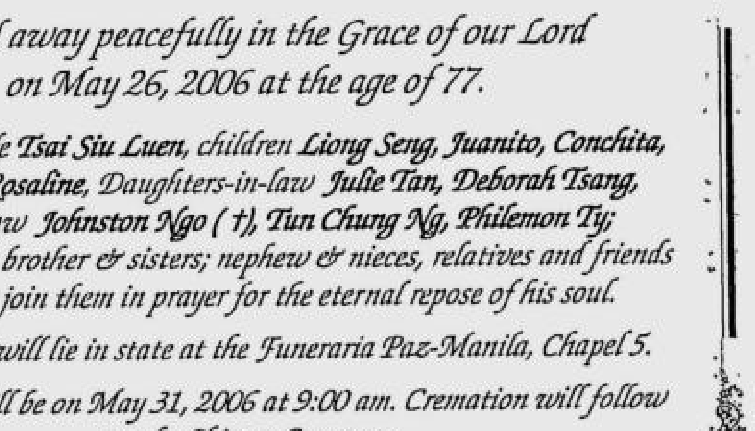

Convergys Corp(NYSE: CVG), the country's largest employer of knowledge workers, extended a helping hand to victims of the Southern Leyte landslide with a donation to the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) of over P640,000. Photo shows PNRC Chair Senator Richard J. Gordon accepting the check donation from Convergys vice president and country manager Marife Zamora (left) with members of the PNRC Board of Governors. With them are (from left) Secretary General Corazon Alma G. De Leon; Gov. Bai Fatima Sinsuat; Convergys human resources director Anna Villamor, former Los Baños mayor Gov. Andrew Nocon; Justice Leonor Ines Luciano; PNRC Gov. Lourdes Loyola and Gov. Lourdes Casas Quezon.

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Worldbex Services Int'l (WSI) has finalized its agreement with Ayala Center Cebu, making the latter a supporting partner for the WSI-organized 1st Cebu Auto Show, slated on June 1-4 at the Ayala Center, Cebu City. Present at the agreement signing were (from left): Janice Anfone, Ayala Center Cebu marketing supervisor; Juvita Polloso, Ayala Center Cebu marketing manager; Joseph Ang, WSI founding chair; Jill Aithnie Ang, WSI managing director; Edward Diamonon, WSI vice president.

Editor Leo Magno
E-mail: pr_info_tech@inquirer.com.ph
INFOTECH
Text us your feedback: inquirer it name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

SF Chronicle offers podcast for Filipinos

Erwin Oliva
Contributor

ANOTHER FILIPINO-ORIENTED podcast has emerged, this time from US-based newspaper San Francisco Chronicle.

The podcast, dubbed Pinoy Pod, is a weekly program that features interviews, news and information about the Filipino experience in Northern California and the Philippines, according to the US newspaper's website.

People can download or listen to the Pinoy Pod at www.sfgate.com/blogs/podcasts.

A podcast is a radio show that one can listen to or download from the Internet. It can be played on one's computer or downloaded to a portable digital music player, such as the popular iPod.

The first episode highlights Joey Ayala's rendition of the Star Spangled Banner in Filipino, and the subsequent interview with him on why he translated the American anthem into Filipino.

The first episode also features the famous Filipino stand-up comedian Rex Navarette who uses the Filipino culture as basis for his sketches.

The podcast episodes are mainly in English but the Filipino language will in the future be used to reach more Filipinos, the podcast's proponents said.

Pinoy Pod is a product of the San Francisco Chronicle's Filipino journalists. These are deputy managing editor Leslie Guevarra, editorial writer and columnist Pati Poblete, podcast producer Benny Evangelista, business reporter and Pinoy Pod producer Ben Pimentel, reporter Cicero Estrella and copy editor Michelle Louie.

Pinoy Pod will include topics on arts, culture, entertainment, business and political and social issues. It will run from 10 to 20 minutes, and will be updated every Tuesdays.

According to the San Francisco Chronicle, this is the first time a major American newspaper is offering a podcast for Filipinos.

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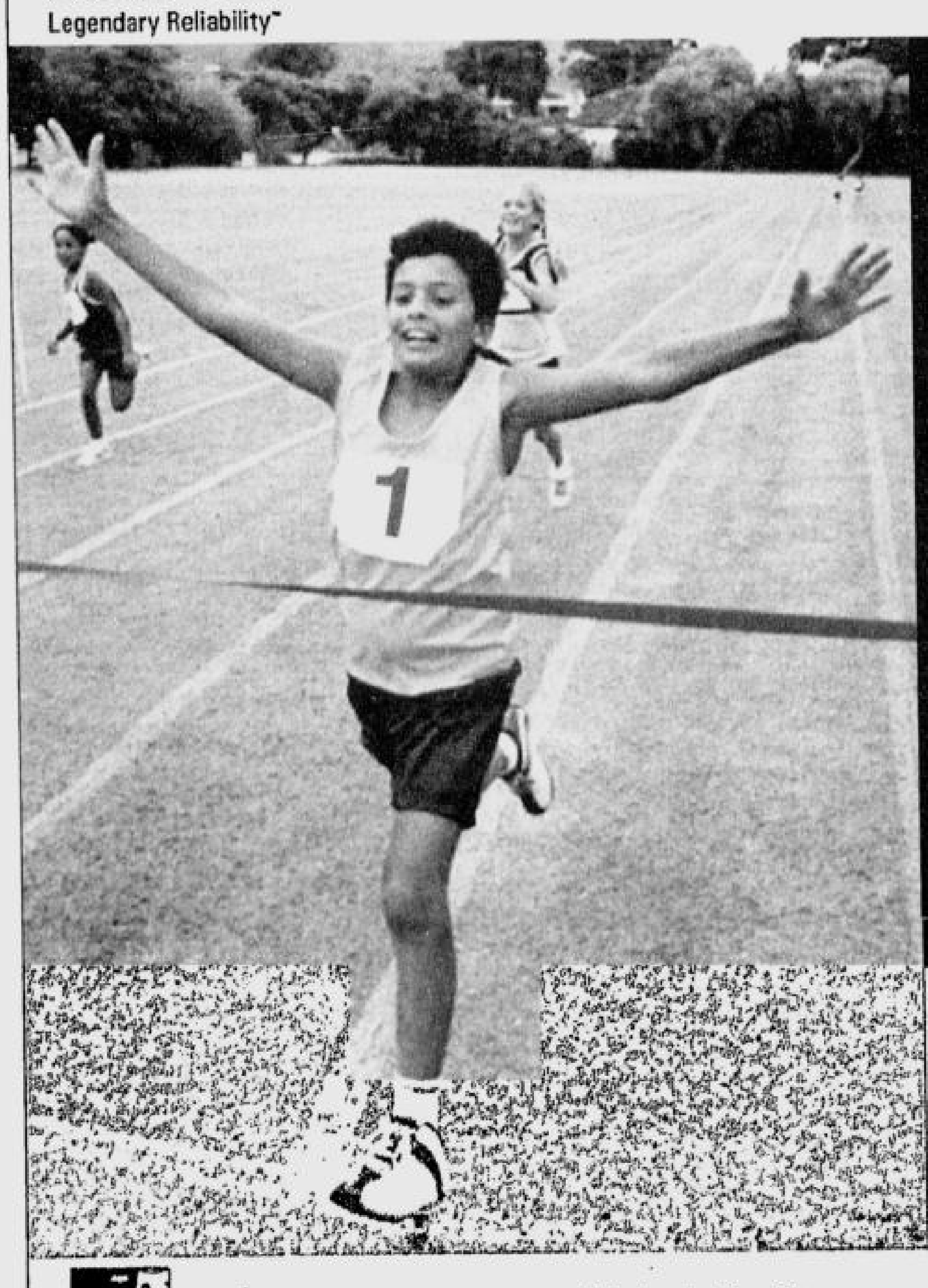

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And we couldn't have done this without our customers and partners who have placed APC as the clear market winner over its competitors.

*According to the study entitled "Philippines UPS Markets" published by Frost & Sullivan, the global Growth Consulting company, APC was the leading UPS supplier in the less than 1 kVA range in 2005.

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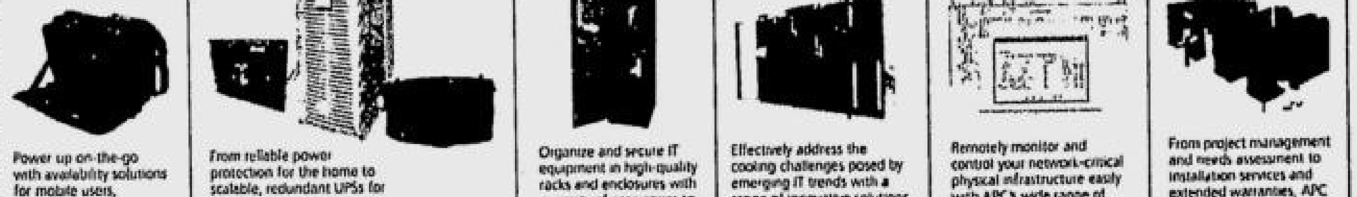

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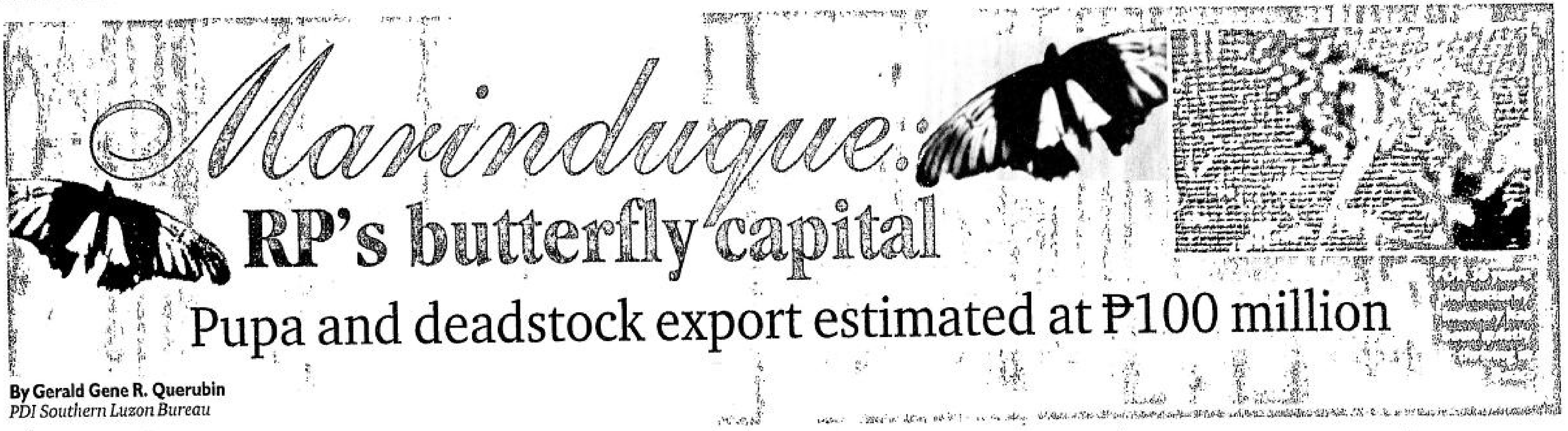

Marinduque: RP's butterfly capital

Pupa and deadstock export estimated at ₱100 million

By Gerald Gene R. Querubin
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BOAC, MARINDUQUE—Unknown to many, the island-province of Marinduque is considered the Butterfly Capital of the Philippines, contributing 85 percent of the country's butterfly and pupa exports.

More than three-fourths of the butterfly breeders nationwide are based in this province.

Butterfly farming started only recently but is fast becoming an international growth industry with estimates of P100 million worth of Philippine exports.

Worldwide, the market is estimated at $100 million.

Framed crafts

Prof. Emma Cabildo of the Marinduque State College (MSC), says the butterfly industry in Marinduque started 30 years ago.

From a single livelihood project in the '70s, it has grown into an industry. The introduction of the processing of dead stocks into finished products like laminated and framed crafts, has become a remarkable development of the industry.

In a study made in 2002 by three undergraduate students from MSC—Heredina Montreras, Cherry Evangelista and Magdalo Valenzuela—they indicated a positive outlook for the butterfly industry of the province.

According to their study, the industry generated an estimated sale of about P100 million from export of pupa and deadstock by exporters in Marinduque in 2001.

Exported pupa, based on the records of the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau of the DENR, increased from only 4,021 pupa exported in 1991 to 71,068 in 1992 and 153,864 in 1993.

More recent figures from the Marinduque Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, show the province's exports of butterfly pupa and deadstock have substantially risen the last three years.

The volume was 576,460 in 2003; 644,480 in 2004 and 974,720 in 2005.

No records are available on export values.

Cultured butterflies

In a paper by Jason Weintraub of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, USA, he stated that studies of the lifecycle of butterflies in the tropical rainforest had resulted in cottage industry "farms" where live butterflies are cultured under controlled conditions to provide supply of pupae.

Weintraub wriote a Malaysian entomologist, David Goth, pioneered butterfly farming in the 80s.

It is labor-intensive but has resulted in large-scale production of parasitic-free pupae for export.

Dr. Carlos J. Andam, MSC vice president for research and extension, says with growing interests of many people to venture into butterfly farming and the development of products and market for this commodity, there is now a need to identify the species of butterflies in the wilderness and their host plants to sustain production and to compete with other countries in exports.

In the butterfly industry, sustainability is a function of diversity of butterfly species and their host plants, he says.

"Each kind of butterfly feeds only on one specific plant and the female butterfly will lay her eggs only on the plant it feeds on," Andam adds.

He has been advocating for the establishment of a National Butterfly Research Center in the province to support and reinforce the province's butterfly farmers with their production.

Products

According to Andam, butterfly products range from deadstocks or papered adult butterflies used in exhibits and mounted on frames; pupa and livestock for release during special occasions; and butterfly houses in parks, tourist spots, museums and recreation centers.

Deadstocks are also used in manufacturing décor products such as lampshades, clocks, and paper weights, among other items.

"With the developments in butterfly farming, people should now have a new way of looking at the forest. People like butterfly enthusiasts are certain to discover that there is much that they can sensibly obtain from the natural vegetation if protected, managed and utilized wisely. The forest is a far more valuable resource that it was overexploited for one of its parts. And butterflies are helping show people the way, as it is in Marinduque," adds Andam.

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Road then less traveled by bankers proved to be gold mine

Story of a rural bank that started half a century ago

ONE of the rural financial institution's branches

By Peter La. Julian
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN FERNANDO CITY—"DO NOT gamble. If a client sees you on the gambling table, he will always think you are gambling with his deposits."

The advice still rings true in the mind of Ives Nisce, president and chief executive officer of Rang-y Bank. It was given to him by his late father, Rodolfo, long before the scion took over the helm of Ilocandia's most successful rural bank.

NISCE

The young Nisce, a 1973 economics graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University, obeyed his father and stayed away from gambling, developing instead a liking for sports like golf which he plays with friends at a golf course in the former Wallace Air Station here.

In the fairways, ideas come to him on how to run a bank efficiently and how to make it responsive to the needs of the times.

The advice also served as a guiding principle for Nisce in steering the bank: Never gamble with the clients' money by going into ventures other than those aimed at improving the socio-economic life of the people in the countryside.

"And the fulfillment of that mission is the secret of our success in Rang-ay," Nisce tells the INQUIRER.

"We live up to our name," he adds. Rang-ay is the Ilocano word for progress.

To maintain its position as number one in countryside banking in the Ilocos region, Pangasinan and the Cordillera, Rang-ay, set up in 1956, tries to be "progressive" in its ideas.

With him calling the shots, Rang-ay Bank has earned the moniker, the "hard-working bank," as it puts on longer office hours, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., without noon break; and opens on Saturdays. Most Manila-based banks open at 9 a.m., close at 3 p.m. and are closed on Saturdays.

Humble beginnings

The only gambling Rang-ay Bank was involved in was that done by its founders when they decided to put up a bank in the countryside—then considered a nonviable enterprise.

"But our pioneering incorporators were imbued with a sense of mission to serve the farmers, fisher folk, market vendors, even micro-entrepreneurs," Nisce, now in his early 50s, says.

Rang-ay Bank's first depositors and borrowers came from these sectors that were not considered "bankable" by financial institutions, he says.

The first branch was in the old Nisce ancestral home on Gov. Luna Street in San Fernando.

Depositors from the surrounding towns and villages would come to the bank carrying their ware in large *bayong* (native bags made of coconut fronds) laden with fish, vegetables and even live chicken, says Nisce, quoting his mother, Eufrosina, the bank chair.

There were only two banks in La Union at that time: Rang-ay Bank and the government-owned Philippine National Bank. But even with only one competitor, it was hard to convince people to deposit their money with Rang-ay, Nisce says.

Birth pains

Rang-ay Bank experienced the usual pains of growing up in its first year. But it has a built-in advantage: The good name of Nisce's family, who founded the bank. His grandfather, Antonio Querol, a native of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, was San Fernando's first town doctor, while his grandmother, Numeriana Tavora-Querol, was a civic leader of Agoo, La Union.

Soon depositors and borrowers came marching in and increased in number. Eventually, Rang-ay Bank, which started operations on Jan. 12, 1956 with four employees, grew and was ready to expand to other areas where its services were needed.

Nisce's father, Rodolfo, a lawyer and former member of the La Union provincial board, was Rang-ay Bank's first general manager. He also acted as collector, inspector and appraiser.

Nisce's mother, Eufrosina, was the teller who doubled as cashier, while Lorenzo Flores was the bookkeeper, and Melania Carmello was the secretary. The bank could not afford to hire a security guard.

Less traveled road

Needless to say, what other bankers then avoided as a less traveled road (countryside banking) proved to be Rang-ay's gold mine.

In 1962, with more employees and more depositors and borrowers, the bank moved to a more spacious building in the city.

That year, the Central Bank granted it the authority to accept demand deposits, making it one of the country's rural banks to offer such facility.

Several years later, it was given the authority to offer other services like granting loans to small and medium entrepreneurs, farmers, especially those engaged in tobacco production.

For its operational efficiency and phenomenal growth, Rang-ay Bank was awarded by the Central Bank as one of the "outstanding rural banks" in 1975.

Years later, as it continued to excel in countryside banking, Rang-ay Bank would receive awards like the golden award of excellence bestowed on it by Equitable PCI Bank. On Oct. 16, 2003, the bank was cited as the most outstanding countryside financial institution in the Ilocos and the Cordillera.

For six years from 1996 to 2002, it was also cited by the Land Bank of the Philippines as the most outstanding participating financial institution of the countryside loan fund.

In 1976, Rang-ay Bank opened its first extension office at the site of the old market in this city, a walking distance away from its main office.

Computerization

In October of the same year, the bank, with then fresh graduate 23-year-old Ives taking over as president and manager, began computerizing its operations, the first rural bank in Northern Luzon to do so.

In 1982, a year after it inaugurated its new offices at the newly-built Nisce-Querol building on Gov. Luna Street, another branch was opened in Tubao town.

In the 1990s, four more Rang-ay Bank branches were opened in Baguio (1992); Dagupan (1995); Candon (1997), and Laoag (1998).

In the 2000s, three more branches were put up in Agoo (2000); Sta. Cruz, Ilocos Sur (2003), and Vigan (2004). In July 2004, it acquired the Burgos Rural Bank of Burgos, Ilocos Sur.

This year, Rang-ay Bank, its application already approved by the Banko Sentral ng Pilipinas, is set to put up branches in Bacnotan, Balaoan and Naguilian towns, all in La Union, and in La Trinidad, Benguet.

No other rural bank in the Ilocos region and the Cordillera could match the achievement of Rang-ay Bank.

"And we have also proven that lending to farmers, fisher folk, the small and medium micro-entrepreneurs can be a viable enterprise," Eufrosina Nisce said in a message she gave during the bank's 50th anniversary celebrations last January.

With its resources totaling P647 million as of 2005, Rang-ay remains the leading rural bank in the Ilocos region and Cordillera based on data of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

Since 1956, it has granted loans amounting to P7 billion to more than 100,000 borrowers in the Ilocos provinces, Pangasinan and the Cordillera. Most of these loans were granted to agriculture and SMEs.

"Our success is not measured in terms of the assets we have amassed or the profits we have gained but by how far our depositors and borrowers have grown with us," said Nisce, echoing the pro-active philosophy and meaning of the Ilocano word rang-ay.

Among those whom the Rang-ay Bank lent to include a Tondo boy who now owns a beach resort and restaurant; a bus conductor who acquired a fleet of buses; a poverty-stricken stowaway (female) who is one of the biggest dealers of seasonal fruits, frozen products and eggs in San Fernando.

"All these enterprises are in the communities we serve, creating jobs therein, and so we play a vital role in the local economy, keeping its lifeblood flowing and empowering farmers, the fisher folk and micro-entrepreneurs with their successful ventures," says Nisce.

Mag agri tayo: Toward sustainable agriculture

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Corazon PB. Claudio

THE TITLE OF THIS PIECE IS ALSO THE title of a book that we are now developing to call attention to the close relationship between agriculture and environment.

We have not paid enough attention to that relationship, perhaps because we have been preoccupied with industrial pollution, which has, indeed, become a threat to life in some areas. But we ignore or do little to stop the rampant burning of rice straws in the countryside, which also has an adverse impact on public health and climate change.

About 70 percent of our people depend on agriculture for livelihood and sustenance and farming is the dominant activity in our country. The good news is that recent reports show significant increase in the growth of the agriculture sector's economic output, from 0.54 percent in the first quarter last year to 3.93 percent in the first quarter this year.

That emphasizes the importance of pursuing agricultural development. But we should never do so at the expense of the environment.

Agriculture and environment have profound influence on each other.

"The dream to boost farm productivity and the desire for sufficient food to address the needs of a growing population spur the farmer to exploit his land and other resources. But the search for progress and development disrupts the ways of nature."

That quote is from Philip Daffon, president of FARM Foundation Inc. and director, producer and host of the TV Program, Mag-Agri Tayo in NBN 4, and my co-author of this book in progress.

Indeed, farming provides food and habitat for various species, but it can also adversely impact on the environment through improper agricultural practices and land use.

We now need to ensure that our agriculture sector is environment friendly and sustainable. The latter means integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions in agricultural development.

It also means addressing national and global issues of food security, poverty alleviation, rural development, climate change, water management, biodiversity conservation, and others, with due respect to the laws of nature.

Of the many issues affecting the agricultural ecosystem, biodiversity loss is, perhaps, the most serious threat because it affects all the other issues and it can be irreversible.

This was the subject of the Philippine Biodiversity Country Study that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the United Nations Environment Programme jointly conducted about 10 years ago. The study included an assessment of the diversity of the agricultural ecosystem and the development of recommended conservation and sustainable use strategies that require public-private partnership.

It is time to revisit the results of that study and understand what actions have been taken by both the government and private sector on the recommended strategies.

One of the strategies was to conduct an information, education and communication campaign to encourage the participation of farmers and the general public in conserving our agricultural biodiversity, especially our "indigenous domesticated exotic species."

If most of our readers still do not know what that phrase in quotes means, then we have not gone far in the IEC campaign. The species include domestic animal population composed of carabaos, cattle, horses, hogs, goats and other domesticated species, with carabaos significantly decreasing in population from 10 years ago. How far we have addressed that decreasing trend is interesting to know.

What we now know is that our country remains one of the top 17 countries in terms of biodiversity. But we ranked 125th among 146 countries rated by the 2005 Yale Environmental Sustainability Index, indicating our poor use of our natural resources, including agricultural resources.

Our book will identify and dissect policies that support and promote sustainable agriculture. We shall also discuss some of the major issues that hinder the advancement of sustainable agriculture in the country. We shall present case studies on good farming and related agricultural practices resulting from or influenced by the policies.

We hope to produce a book that will send a clear message—that, from now on, protection of the environment must be a policy and operational concern in the agriculture sector and a critical factor to be considered in agricultural technology and knowledge generation and transfer.

(Dr. Claudio, an engineer-economist and president of EARTH Institute Asia Inc., chairs the MAP Environment and Urban Development Committee. Feedback to mapsec@globenet.com.ph)

Guitarist hits the right note with music chain

By Senen Bravo

Audiophile

JINGS de Guzman (left) passed on the baton to sons Jijo (middle) and Gary at Audiophile's main warehouse on UN Avenue. JANE BRAVO

EVERY TIME JINGS DE Guzman plays out of tune, he would do lots of fine-tuning until he gets his music right—at the basement.

The then 12-year-old would beat the heat and mosquitoes underneath the house, in the name of honing his craft and passion for the guitar.

He eventually carried his lifelong dedication to music to Audiophile, a business that he set up in 1980 which has grown to become one of the country's leading retail chains specializing in audio products.

On display at Audiophile's seven branches is a P200,000 Ibañez guitar, along with other musical and audio parts and accessories.

The Far Eastern University graduate says that in his youth, he would religiously listen to the music of the Ventures. His parents taught him the basics of several instruments starting with keyboards.

He would then perform with a couple of bands and earn P250.

"That was big bucks at the time. From 8:30 in the evening till midnight we would rock the house at Rufino Building in Makati," says the 62-year-old De Guzman.

He also singled out the type of crowd and music at the time.

"Compared with the crowd you see in today's concerts, ours was a lot tamer. Plus the fact that we dished out melodic tunes worth their time and money," says De Guzman.

Several gigs later, he wound up at the Executive Band of Sen. Raul Manglapus and former First Lady Ming Ramos, playing bass. A common friend introduced him to the late senator.

"I would find myself touring with Raul Manglapus in the United States and Europe, getting to know more about the music scene in these parts of the world and honing my own skills," says De Guzman.

In 1975, he shelled out P5,000 from his personal savings to put up Thrift Shop in Paco, Manila, retailing Pioneer, Kenwood, Sansui and JBL products.

"Friends at one point discouraged me because P5,000 could buy me a better guitar," says De Guzman.

He would endure travelling from Clark to Manila to deliver his wares at the 40-square-meter lot shop.

Repair and trade-in of stereos would be added to Thrift Shop's services. He would soon consign some of the products to friends.

"Turntables were beginning to boom in the late '70s to '80s and we wanted to cash in on that demand," says De Guzman.

Thrift Shop would serve as haven for audiophiles who were looking for stereo accessories, such as turntable needles and vinyl long playing albums.

His friend, Ben Yalung, suggested that they directly approach big suppliers, like Audio Technica and Luxman, to widen their reach and avoid middlemen.

Thus Audiophile was born in 1980, catering to broadcast (media outlets), cinema (theaters) and fix installation (clubs, bars, restaurants, disco bars) markets with speakers, equalizers, amplifiers, microphones, guitars, drum sets and percussion instruments.

In five years, Audiophile had carved a niche in these markets, prompting De Guzman to put up branches in Ali Mall and Atrium Makati.

"Our marketing strategy has been to nurture our 50 dealers nationwide who advertise our products to a growing number of customers," says De Guzman.

He said that piracy has driven some recording artists to live shows, with Audiophile supplying the best microphones, musical instruments and audio equipment accessories.

Among Audiophile's customers are performers and bands, like Lani Misalucha, Nina, Barbie, Wolfgang, Razorback and Side A, which endorsed its microphone.

With a steady market, De Guzman set his children to learn the business first hand.

After graduation in 1993 his son Jijo, now Audiophile's division manager, started off at one warehouse on UN Avenue, doing manual labor.

Jijo even took up a master's in entrepreneurship at Asian Institute of Management to cope with his growing responsibilities.

Problems with guitars, drums and other instruments are handled by Audiophile's Marikina service center.

Audiophile also hired foreign acts to complement its marketing strategy, hosting the guitar clinic of Mr. Big guitarist Paul Gilbert who introduced Ibañez guitar to Filipinos in 2001.

Last year also saw the performance of another American guitarist Jennifer Batten (session artist for Sting, Britney Spears and Jeff Beck), who wowed the crowd with DigiTech's GNX 3000 and Jamman Looper features.

De Guzman requires would-be Audiophile dealers to have P500,000 worth of order, a warehouse and a technical staff before they can set up shop.

After years of dealer-based approach, Audiophile plans to line up more branches within the year at SM North, Sta. Rosa and Star Mall.

"Our 60 dealers have already exposed our products nationwide. The secret of retail now is in the mall," says Jijo.

Shares buy back

Corporate Securities Info

Raul J. Palabrica

FOR MOST COMPANIES, ADDITIONAL stockholders mean more money.

But as the number of part owners of a business increases, so does the paper work needed to handle the equity contributions.

The law requires all stockholders to be notified of important developments in the company. Their consent has to be sought before certain decisions can be made by management.

A stockholder who owns, for example, 10 shares, has the same voting and notice rights as another who owns 51 percent of the company.

If the holders of small number of shares are numerous and live far from the company's principal office, the task of complying with the notice requirement can be tedious and expensive.

To cut down on administrative costs, some companies offer to buy back the holdings of small stockholders, with a premium sometimes tacked on to make it attractive.

It's up to the stockholder concerned to decide whether to accept the buyout or hold on to his shares to enjoy the benefits of its dividends, if any.

Cost management

The right of a company to buy back small stockholdings was the subject of a recent query to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The company, which is listed in the stock exchange, plans to write directly to its stockholders and offer to buy back the shares that are below board lot (999 shares and below) for purposes of efficiency and cost management.

The company checked with the SEC to find out if its plan is covered by the mandatory tender offer rule of the Securities Regulation Code.

Essentially, the rule states that "any person or group of persons acting in concert, who intends to acquire 35 percent or more of equity shares in a public company" should disclose that intention and offer to buy the shares of holders of that class of shares to the extent of the planned acquisition.

The rule aims to level the playing field among the stockholders when a third party wants to buy a big chunk of a company's stocks.

Market price

The opportunity to sell should be made available to all similarly situated stockholders and not only to select stockholders who may be privy to the plans of or have been approached by the buyer for that purpose.

The SEC said the subject scheme is not covered by the tender offer rule.

The transaction is governed by the "tender offer by the issuer/buy back" rules which allow a company to reacquire a specific class of shares for any of the following purposes:

"To implement a stock option or stock purchase plan;

"To meet short-term obligations which can be settled by the re-issuance of the repurchased shares;

"To pay dissenting or withdrawing stockholders who are entitled to the payment of their shares under the Corporation Code; and

"Such other legitimate corporate purposes.

The SEC declared the objective behind the proposed action, which uses "below board lot" as the benchmark in determining who should be covered by the buy back, can be considered a legitimate corporate purpose.

The agency, however, emphasized that the offer should be at the market price of the shares during the buy back period. This requirement was laid down to protect the interests of the affected stockholders

Since the shares are publicly traded, the data on the market price can be easily obtained from the stock exchange.

Retained earnings

As in all instances when the law allows the redemption, repurchase or buy back of shares, the SEC stated that the company should have sufficient unrestricted retained earnings in its coffers to finance that action.

Unrestricted retained earnings refer to the "excess of the assets of the corporation over its liabilities including the amount of the legal capital."

The requirement on the kind or source of funds that can be used to redeem or buy back shares is aimed at protecting the company's creditors.

Since the corporation's assets constitute a "trust fund" to which creditors look up to for the payment of their advances, expenses that are not in the ordinary course of business (like a shares buy back) should be funded from sources other than the company's legal capital.

The records on file with the SEC showed the company that made the query had more than enough money in its treasury to effect the buy back without putting its creditors at risk. *(For feedback, write to rpalabrica@inquirer. com. ph)*

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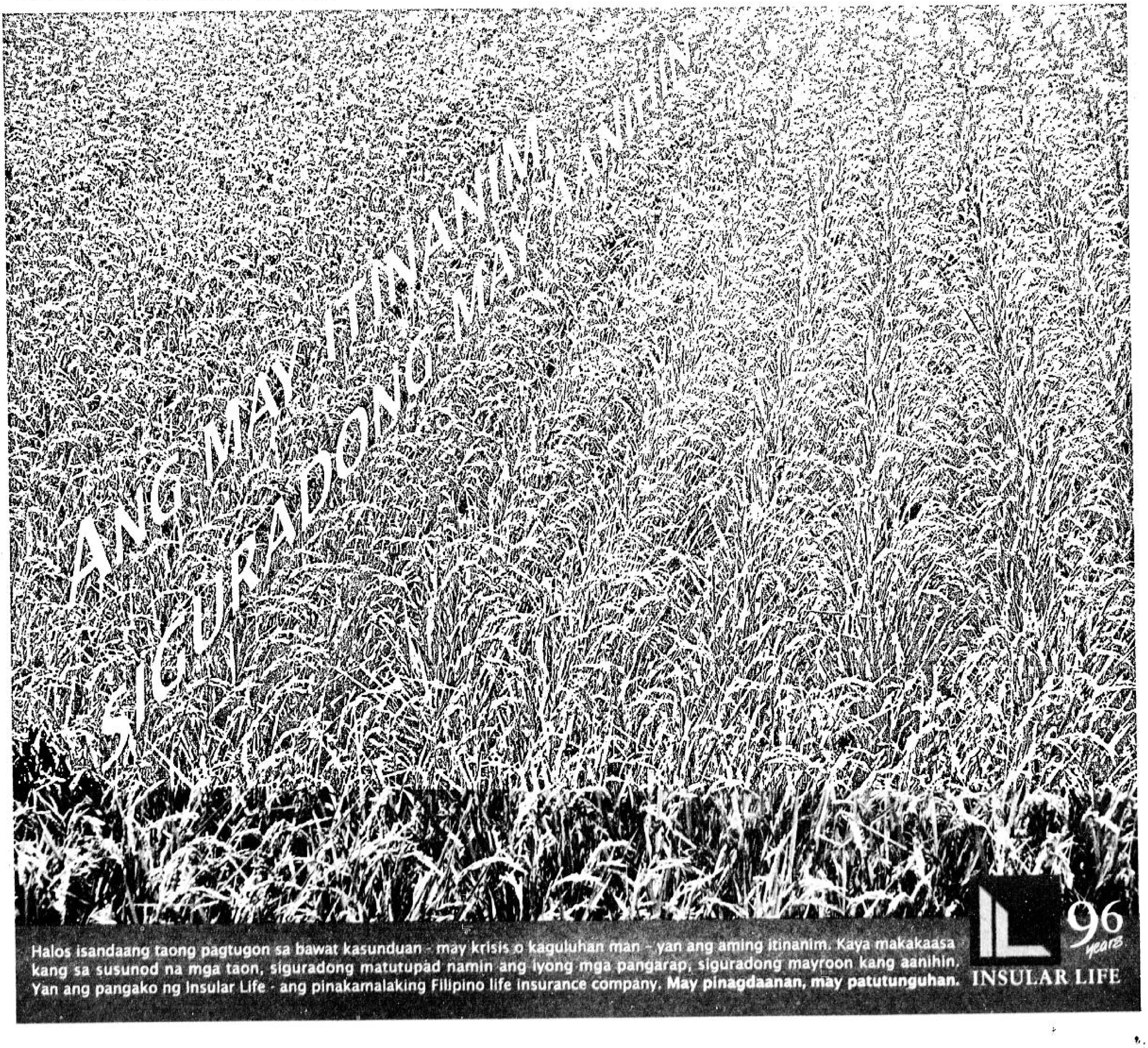

Halos isandaang taong pagtugon sa bawat kasunduan - may krisis o kaguluhan man - yan ang aming itinanim. Kaya makakaasa kang sa susunod na mga taon, siguradong matutupad namin ang iyong mga pangarap, siguradong mayroon kang aanihin. Yan ang pangako ng Insular Life - ang pinakamalaking Filipino life insurance company. **May pinagdaanan, may patutunguhan.**

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BUSINESS Monday

LARRY OCAMPO takes part in the Subic International Triathlon

Hitting the wall but not giving up

Pre-need exec relies on mental strength to carry him and his firm forward

LARRY and Adrian Ocampo

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

ENDURANCE ATHLETES REFER to it as "the wall."

It is that part of the long, arduous race where the athlete, usually a runner, runs out of strength, and the feeling is comparable to hitting a brick wall—you just cannot take another step.

With muscles aching and sweat pouring, some athletes do give up and fall by the wayside.

But there are those who ignore what their body is begging them to do and concentrate on putting one foot in front of the other until the second wind comes along and takes them to the end of their journey.

PET Plans Inc. president Lorenzo T. Ocampo knows what it's like to come up against "the wall," being a triathlete—he runs, cycles and swims.

"At that point, your mind takes over because your body has already reached its physical limitations," Ocampo tells INQUIRER, "I just tell myself to keep on moving and go on, one little step at a time."

Ocampo says an athlete is lucky if he comes up against the wall just once in a long race and the second wind sweeps in quickly.

Sometimes, "the wall" comes up more than once, and the much-awaited second wind, or that surge of new strength, never comes.

But no matter how many times Ocampo has faced "the wall," he is proud to say that he has almost always managed to reach the finish line, even if it means swimming for 3.8 kilometers, cycling for another 180 and then running the last 42 kilometers.

"I did join an adventure race many years ago and my partner and I could not climb the rock wall no matter how we tried as we had never taken climbing lessons," he says.

"We tried until our arms turned to Jello but failed. We've since learned how to climb and joined a few more races. Rock walls are no longer an issue," he adds.

He will need that dogged determination as he faces another type of "wall" in his job as president of a pre-need company.

With the industry beset by sharp drops in sales because of the financial disasters that hit two of the biggest players in the industry, he is hard pressed to find ways to keep the company moving forward.

It's probably safe to bet on Ocampo succeeding at his task as he has never run away from a challenge.

One of the first came his way in 1988 when he was asked to help push sales of the Impulse Spray of Unilever, then named Philippine Refining Corp.

As brand assistant, the Georgetown University graduate had to go around sari-sari stores and other retail outlets to encourage them to carry his product.

He says the work gave him the opportunity to better know the kind of people that his maternal grandfather, the revered Sen. Lorenzo Tañada, served all his life.

He explains that while he and the rest of the Tañada clan were always involved during elections or in demonstrations, he did not really get the chance to know the "masa" well.

"I realized that they really knew their stuff. They were very competent at what they do," Ocampo says.

That intimate knowledge of what the lower to middle-income markets want from Unilever served Ocampo well in the five years that he stayed with Unilever.

From Impulse, he moved on to handle Rexona and Superwheel, which was the biggest brand in Unilever's arsenal at that time, as brand manager.

"I was really mentored there. They set very high standards and it was very tough," Ocampo says. "Many of my ideas were slapped down but I also managed to put in winners."

He was on his way to bigger things at Unilever, but he resigned in 1992 and asked his father, the late Adrian V. Ocampo, if he could join him at PET Plans, which the elder Ocampo set up in 1988 with partners, including Tañada.

"I asked him if I could join because the business was growing quite quickly and I wanted to help," Ocampo says.

The two Ocampos steered the company through highs and lows and it gave the younger Ocampo the opportunity to see his father in a different light.

"He has always been involved in so many things, like manufacturing, building and selling and insurance, and through it all he looked like he was having fun," he says.

It was not all fun, he realized, as there are definite downsides to a son working for his father.

"Sometimes, you mix up the relationship of father and son with employee and superior and he can be quite intense," he says.

Then there is also the perception that he only got his job because he is the son of the owner, but he has learned early on to go beyond it and just concentrate on his work.

He is also his own man, not a shadow of his late father, of whom he is proud.

"Our personalities are very different. He is very good at relating with people. He can immediately connect with them," he says, "I am more deliberate and I can not easily put on the charm."

Their personalities may be different, but they complement and the partnership worked well until late last year when the elder Ocampo passed away.

Ocampo had to take over all of the reins of PET Plans and also look at the operation of other companies—Petnet, involved in the remittance business; and AV Ocampo and Associates, an insurance brokerage firm.

Since then he has been taking difficult but necessary steps to ensure the survival of the pre-need firm. Branches were cut from as much as 130 to just 41, 30 percent of the work force was let go and costs cut—all because the pre-need industry is just 40 percent of what it was three years ago.

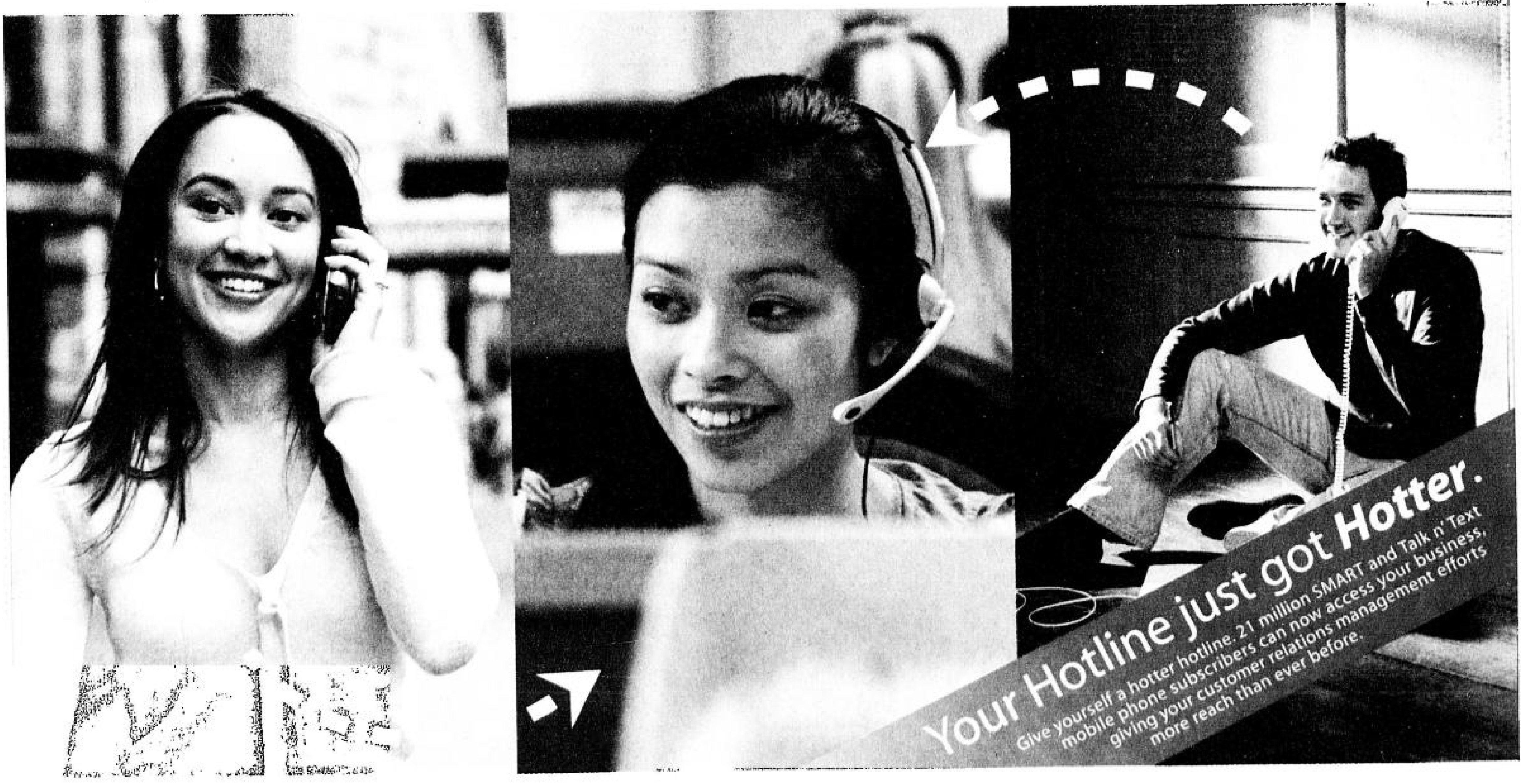
Sales have been hard to come by because potential customers were spooked by the inability of the country's top pre-need firms to pay their obligations to plan holders.

Ocampo says PET Plans is not about to renege on its obligations to its plan holders saying it has a large enough trust fund to cover its financial obligations.

He, however, says with business conditions as they are, it will be very difficult for the industry itself to survive. The industry, however, is still looking at the Securities and Exchange Commission for some leeway to allow them to continue and remain profitable.

Ocampo, thus, comes face to face with another "wall," this time in business. And like on the track, he relies on his mental strength to carry him and his company forward.

He never gave up before, and he's not about to start now.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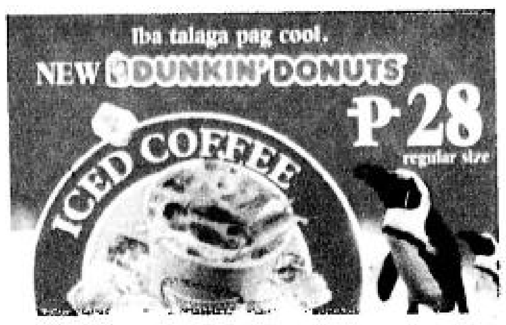
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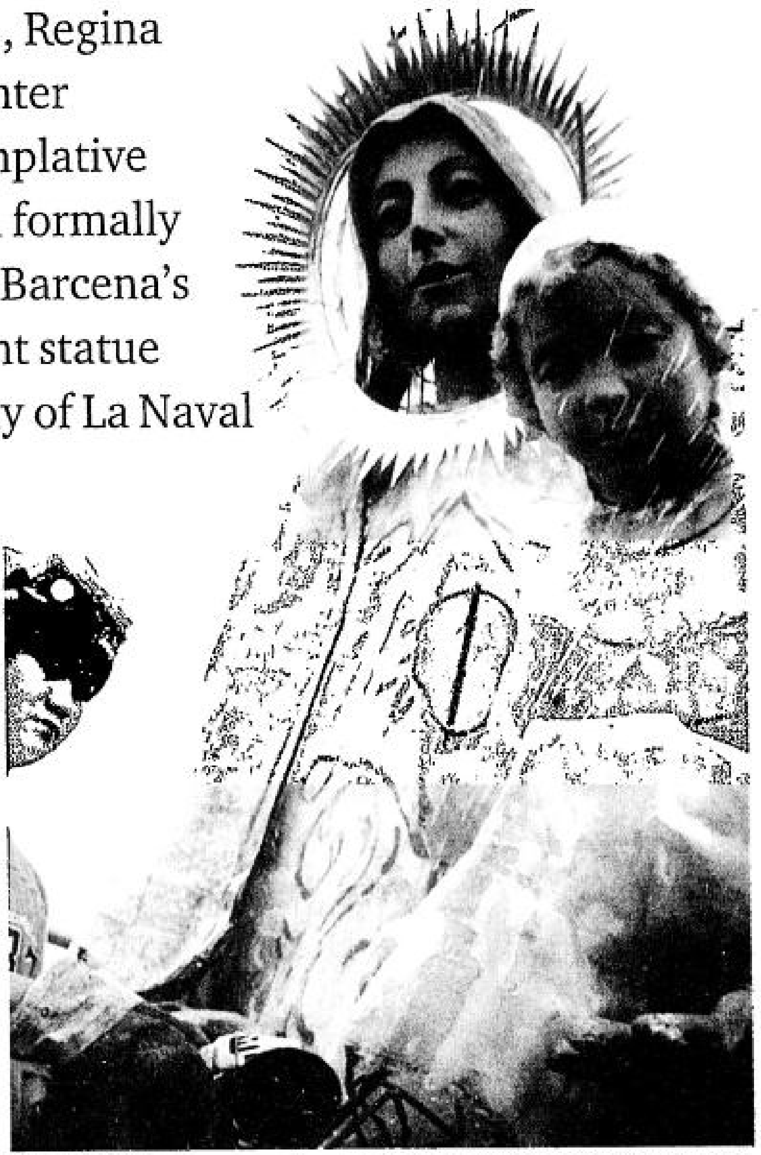
30-foot Marian statue rises in QC

On May 31, Regina Rosarii Center for Contemplative Prayer will formally unveil Joe Barcena's magnificent statue of Our Lady of La Naval

A VIEW from the deck atop the Regina Rosarii Center for Contemplative Prayer shows the artist ensconced in the Lady's halo.



SCULPTOR Barcena peers from the Marian sculpture with his work tools.

By Gino Dormiendo
Contributor

IN WHAT COULD BE the most fitting way to close the Marian month of May, the Regina Rosarii Center for Contemplative Prayer, run by the Dominican Sisters of Regina Rosarii (OP Regina), with the support of the Regina Rosarii Contemplative Association, will formally unveil José "Joe" Barcena's magnificent statue of Our Lady of La Naval May 31.

The 30-foot image is the biggest yet dedicated to the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, who was believed to have aided the vastly outnumbered Spanish-Filipino fleet in the historic naval battles in the 17th century against the superior Dutch invaders. The victory of the defenders was canonized as a miracle, hence the title Our Lady of La Naval.

The statue stands in a private property on Scout Fernandez, Bgy. Laging Handa, a stone's throw from bustling Tomas Morato Avenue in Quezon City.

It is the pièce de résistance of the Davao-based sculptor who has created a number of Marian shrines in Naga City; Taytay, Rizal; Mati in Davao Oriental; Tagum in Davao del Norte; Tagaytay and Davao City.

A Fine Arts, major in Painting, alumnus of the University of Santo Tomas, the 31-year-old Barcena has worked in close partnership with Sr. Eppie Brazil, founder of the Dominican Sisters of Regina Rosarii, the congregation behind the Regina Rosarii Shrines in Tagum and Tagaytay.

Says Barcena: "We have envisioned a sanctuary of contemplative silence in the heart of a business district, an eloquent reminder that God is indeed present and truly alive in the midst of all the noise pollution that is now one of the most serious maladies of our time."

Born in Naga City, Barcena comes from a family deeply rooted in religion. As a child, he was exposed to his grandmother's, as well as the town's, fealty to Our Lady of Peñafrancia, whose gigantic processions fired up his young imagination. His great-grandfather and grandfather, both named Federico, were famous local sculptors.

In college, the then budding sculptor cast in fiberglass the bust of Pope John Paul II. Another piece on the Pope, which won first prize in a contest using lahar material, became part of a diorama on the Pope's life and is now enshrined in the Vatican.

A Marian devotee himself, Barcena worked feverishly on the statue, erecting it aloft a five-story house. His medium of choice was fiberglass; he draped her figure and reinforced it with steel and iron to withstand stormy weather. At the foot of the Lady, a chorus of cherubim floats amid a garland of drifting clouds.

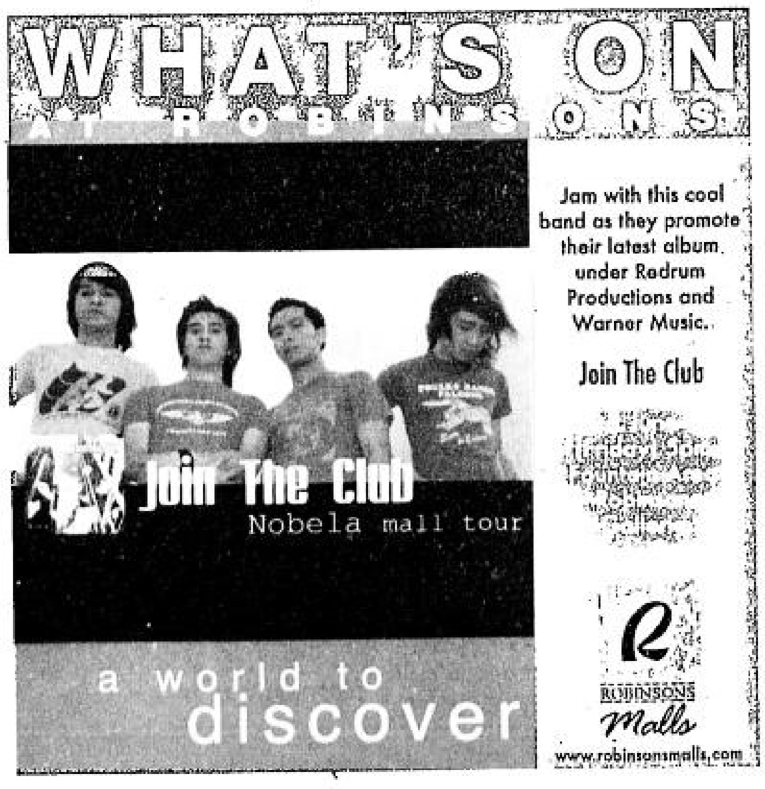
One unique feature of the statue is that it stands on a fully rotating pedestal, capable of turning 360 degrees, thanks to an electrical mechanism the sculptor has devised. The icon's towering presence in the surrounding area is visible to everyone, including the high-rise structures of the two major TV networks.

(The Tagaytay Marian Shrine Barcena built earlier is a testament to his landscape savvy, not to mention his unique gifts to bring out the best features of an arboreal setting.)

The Dominican prayer center's interior altar, located by the building entrance, has another oeuvre of the artist: a modernist, impressively minimalist *retablo*, featuring serenely hued fiberglass etching generated by lighting fixtures conducive to contemplation and meditation. Sprawled around are oversized throw pillows for sitting and meditation.

Envisioned to become the permanent home of Our Lady in the city, the Regina Rosarii Center for Contemplative Prayer is a sacred space, a sanctuary of silence, an oasis of hope, where peace and harmony, crowned by the magnificence of God's creation, shall reign.

As St. Dominic himself said: "Our preaching is the sharing of our contemplative insights, the fruits of our contemplation, to the poor and broken."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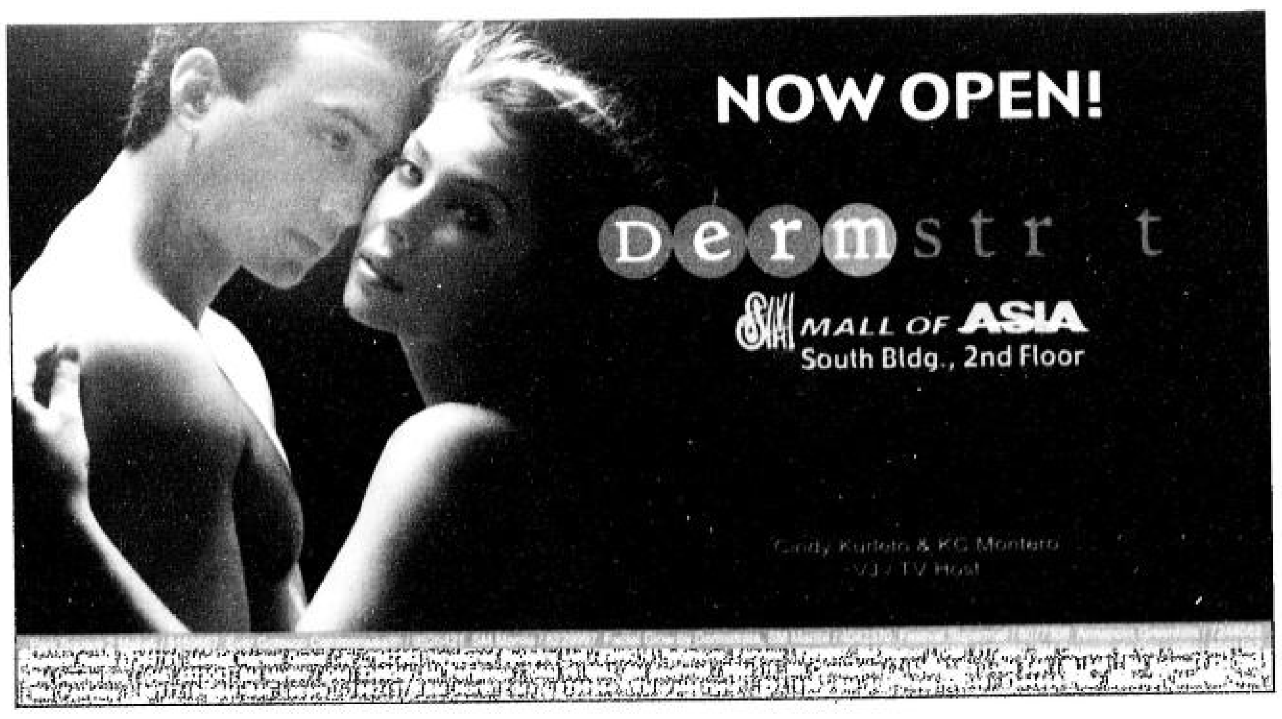
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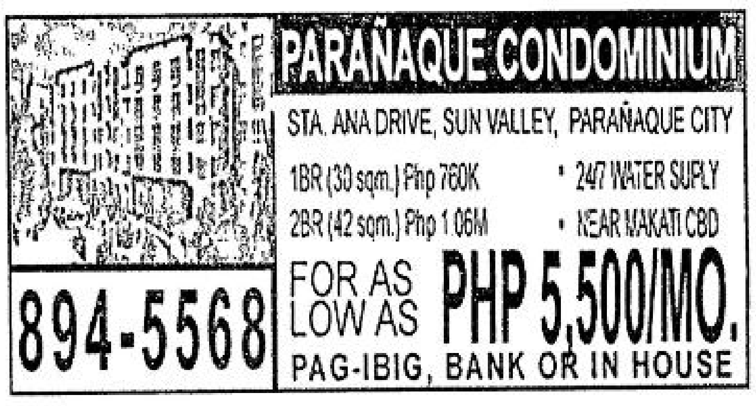
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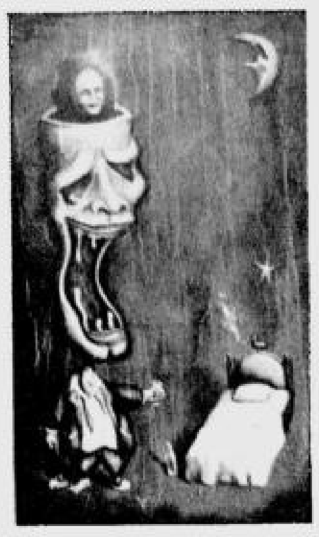
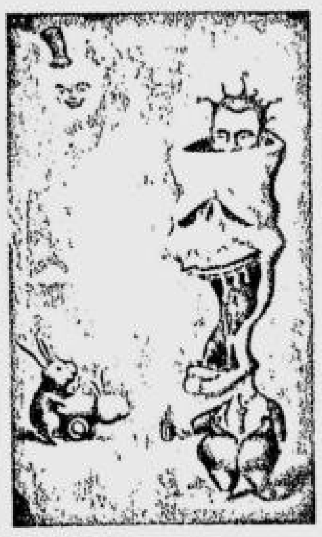
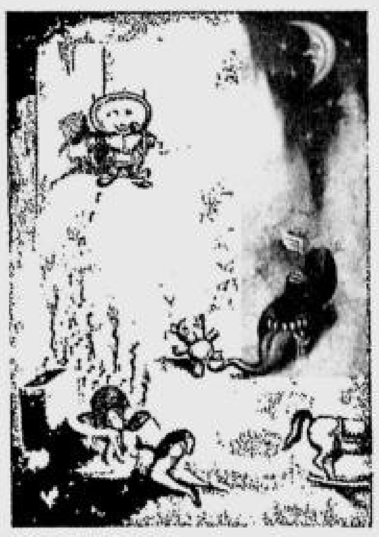
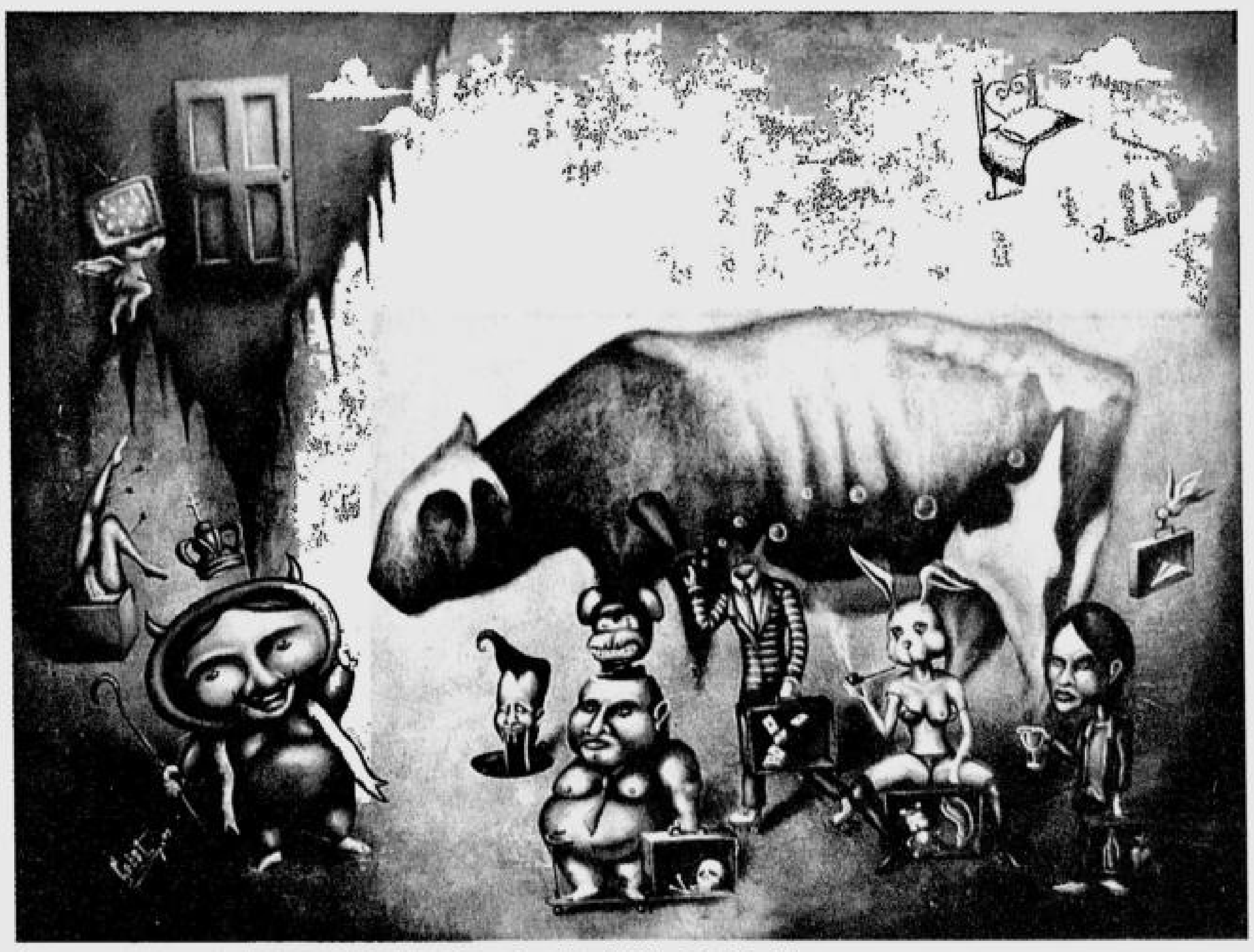

"A BEAUTIFUL Collapse," by Espiritu


"WAKING up from a Car Crash," by Espiritu


"SATURDAY Evening... Down the Drain Again," by Espiritu

Between wet dreams and waking hours


"DANCING Towards Oblivion with Tragedy on Our Hands," by Crist Espiritu

By Constantino C. Tejero

A THICK BREW OF POP ART AND Surrealism usually appears in the works of upcoming young artists. There's something about the unleashed imagination, a wildness in color and form, akin to rebellion, that always appeals to the young.

That interesting mix is seen in Janet Balbarona and Crist Espiritu's joint exhibit "Volatile Fix," 19 pieces in oil on canvas, until May 30 in Blue Room Art Gallery, 1534 Lacuña St., Bangkal, Makati City.

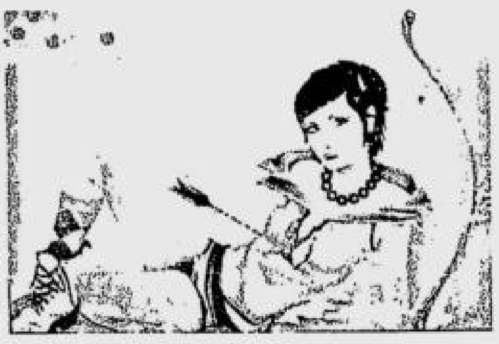
This is edgy art we expect from the young. Both Fine Arts graduates from University of Santo Tomas, Balbarona has seven pieces in the show while Espiritu has 12.

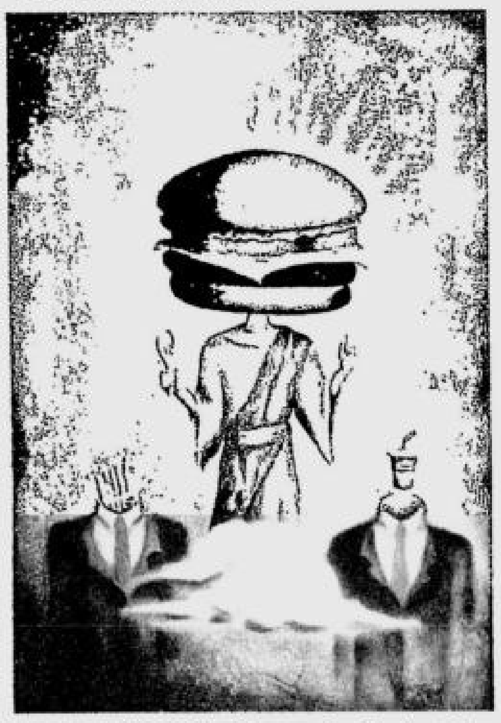
If the former's art appears inspired by fashion-magazine illustration, the latter's resembles editorial cartoon. Both works can't be far from Poster Art.

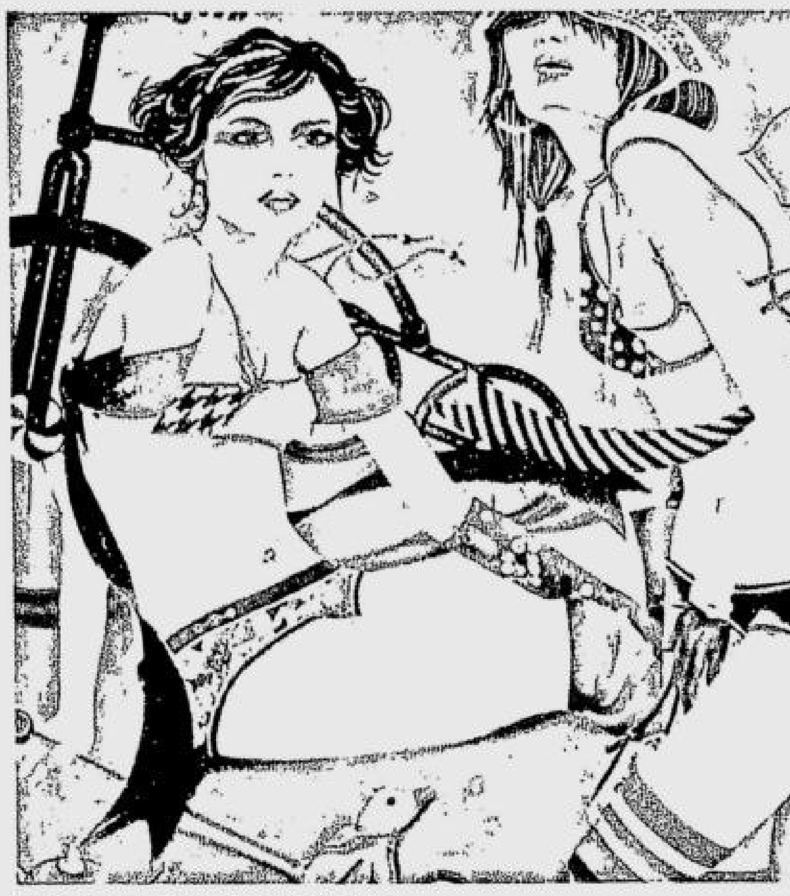
Balbarona depicts young women solo or duo posing as if in a fashion shoot à la Avedon, particularly in "Bittersweet Sixteen" and "Dreaming in Stripes." She uses flat, clear, commercial colors à la Wesselmann or Rosenquist.

Sometimes the imagery verges on soft porn, as in "Doll House," "Ricochet," "Thieves of the Heart." But this is deceptive, because Balbarona's posing subjects, looking directly at the viewer as if on a dare or challenge, are actually near descendants of the women of Sigmar Polke and Egon Schiele.

Watch out. They're no victims of sexual exploitation or commercialism, but could be the victimizers themselves—some budding femme fatales.


"RICOCHET," by Balbarona


"THE EERIE Waking Hours of an Endorphin Junkie," by Espiritu


"DOLL House," by Janet Balbarona

While Balbarona's draftsmanship aspires to a cool realism, Espiritu's turns to sheer caricature. Against planes of earth colors, slate-green, gray, umber, ochre, red, gold, the artist unleashes his unconscious by floating or drifting off figures that are more cartoonish than lifelike.

His art is obviously influenced by Dali—not the Dali of "The Crucifixion" or "The Last Supper" but the Dali of "Sleep" or "The Persistence of Memory."

His art thrives on dreamlike images with corresponding titles that sound just as stoned: "The Eerie Waking Hours of an Endorphin Junkie," "Like M. Stipe I Don't Sleep... I Dream," "Dancing Towards Oblivion with Tragedy on Our Hands," "Saturday Evening... Down the Drain Again," "Waking up from a Car Crash," "Subconscious Tripping with George," "A Beautiful Collapse."

His world is populated by demons, ghoulish figures, cows and rabbits, crescent moon, disembodied angel wings, human bodies sprouting hamburgers or French fries for heads—replete with Freudian slips and Jungian motifs.

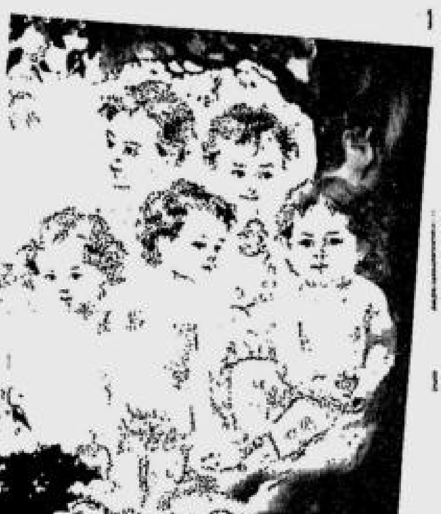
Says the exhibit note: "The pensive poses of Balbarona's lithe models and the wry slyness of Espiritu's satirical figures are a study in emotional contrasts as well as an intriguing cocktail of visual styles. One is instantly caught up in the middle of the well-posed countenances and sardonic glances of the artists' subjects, which are alternately reminiscent of glossy glamour-magazine photo shoots and lampoon comic caricatures.

"Between them, Balbarona and Espiritu entangle the viewer in tensions that are as unsettling as they are familiar. Caught between wet dreams and eerie waking hours, the heat of the moment builds up to a flashpoint."

By the look of it, "Volatile Fix" must be an exhibit produced by party animals. While Balbarona's art seems like a product of a fashionista, Espiritu's is of a hard drinker.

The former is a tease, the latter a hangover. Just living up to The Factory.

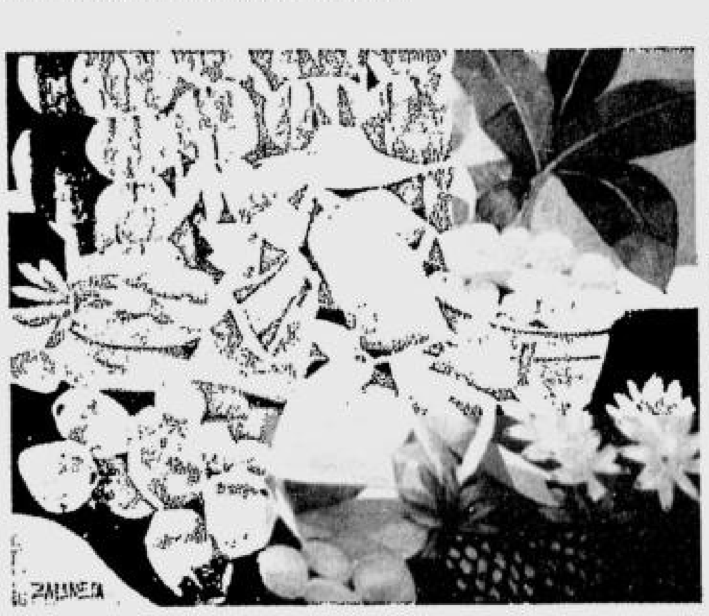
'Rhapsody' exhibit


"CHERUBS," by Caloy Gabuco

THE SOCIAL SERVICES Committee of the House of Representatives with Choice Expression Gallery presents "Rhapsody 2," an exhibition celebrating life and harvest.

The exhibit features works by various established and emergent artists such as Angel Cacnio, Ramon Orlina, Caloy Gabuco, Oscar Zalameda, Angelito Antonio, Araceli Dans, Eduardo Castrillo, Omi Reyes, Juvenal Sansó, Lydia Velasco, Fred Ramirez, Marcel Antonio, Emmanuel Garibay, Michael Cacnio, Roel Obemio, Norman Dreo, Aner Sebastian, Elios Santos and Bin Samonte.

The show will benefit the Philippine Mental Health Association and Rondalla on Wheels. The exhibit runs through June at the South Building lobby of the Batasang Pambansa. Call 8990717 or 8990718.


"HARVEST," by Oscar Zalameda

A harmony of art and music

By Joanna Marie Grace Romero
Contributor

THE OPENING OF "LA Musique IV" enthralled guests as it merged music and the visual arts at the Galerie Joaquin Main in San Juan.

The perceptible balance of the two art forces proved obvious from the beginning. Leading the ribbon-cutting ceremony were artist Juvenal Sanso, who was very recently awarded with the Presidential Medal of Merit, and pianist Raul Sunico, both internationally acclaimed artists.

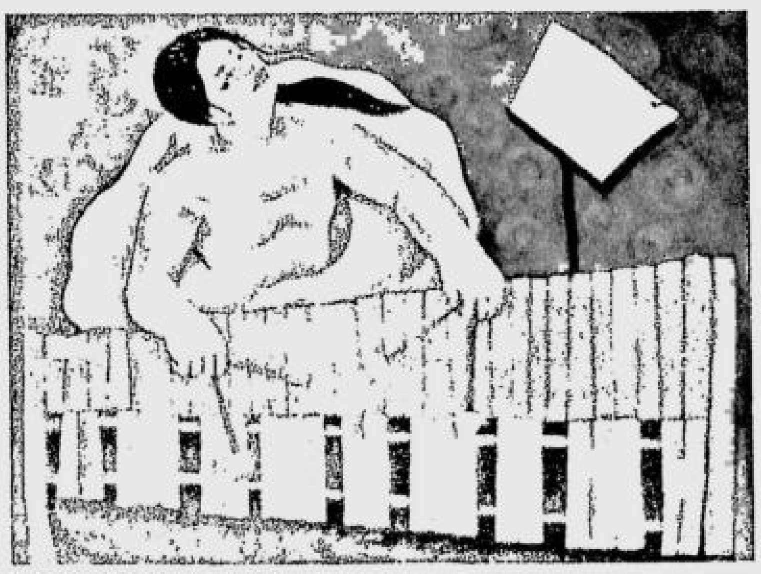
"La Musique IV," opened in connection with National Heritage Month, saw fine renditions of classical pieces by soprano Joscephine Gomez and tenor Frankie Aseniero.

Timeless compositions by Nicanor Abelardo and Lucio San Pedro were rendered by highly respected musicians such as pianists Dick Zamora and Carlos Perion, violinist John Lesaca, and flutists Sonny Yangco and Lenny de Jesus.

As finale, Sunico played a heartfelt *kundiman* plus a suite of music from the Broadway musical "My Fair Lady," which left the audience clamoring for more.

"La Musique IV" consists of a fine selection of artworks from 22 artists who make unique interpretations of music in various media.

Jerry Morada's surreal oil-on-canvas pieces are stimulating. His 48" x 36" "Musika" starkly avoids the Filipiniana figures he has come to be known for and instead focuses on musical instruments, chopped to reveal only their upper bodies and ornamented by the brown scapular, a staple motif of his.


"MARIMBA" by Bayani Acala

JOHN Lesaca

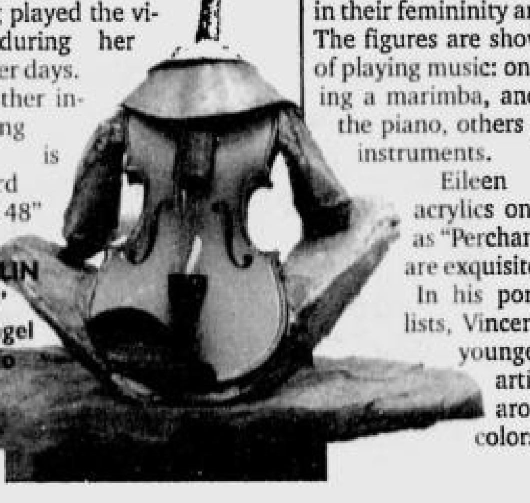
Landscape impressionist Felix Tiglao's "Himig ng Dalaga" and "Alaala" are a diptych showing a woman in her youth playing a violin and an old lady reminiscing about having played the violin during her younger days.

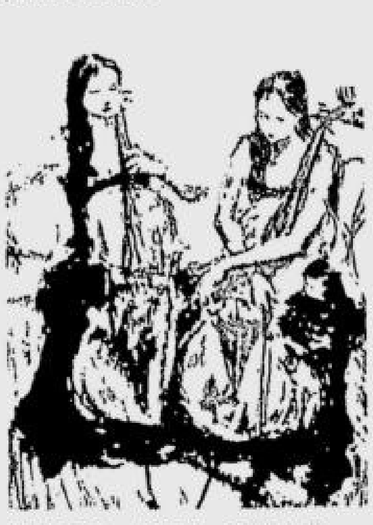
Another interesting piece is Bernard Vista's 48" x 36" "Ensemble" painting of three musicians complete with Vista's signature tilted heads, outsized hands and feet. The positioning of the figures in the painting evokes harmony in the music produced by their cello and violins.

Bayani Acala's women portray a sense of quiet repose, rejoicing in their femininity and musicality. The figures are shown in the act of playing music: one figure striking a marimba, another playing the piano, others playing wind instruments.

Eileen Escueta's acrylics on canvas such as "Perchance to Dream" are exquisite.

In his portraits of cellists, Vincent de Pio, the youngest featured artist, plays around various colors of earth tone or simple hues of black and white. His works are highly textured.

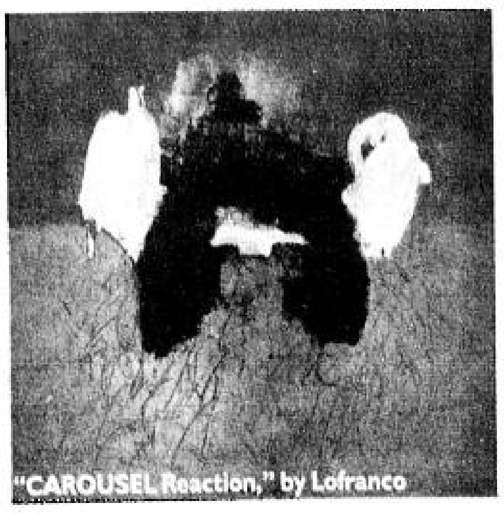

"VIOLIN Man," by Angel Cacnio


"BLACK and White Cellists," by Vincent de Pio

Highly expressive are the works of National Artist Arturo Luz, whose linear and geometric acrylics on canvas are tasteful and intriguing.

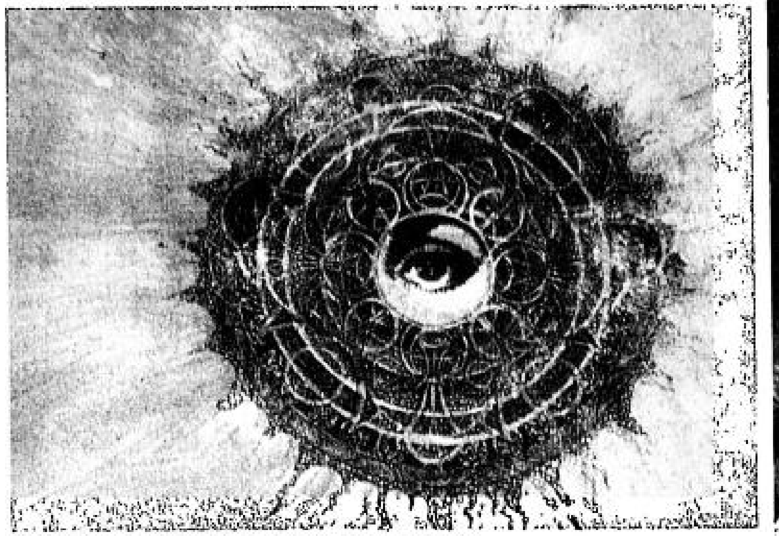
Sansó, Mario Parial and Lydia Velasco also render their personal interpretations of music: gleeful, festive, contemplative. Their works, as always, never cease to allure.

VISUAL ARTS



Lofranco at West Gallery

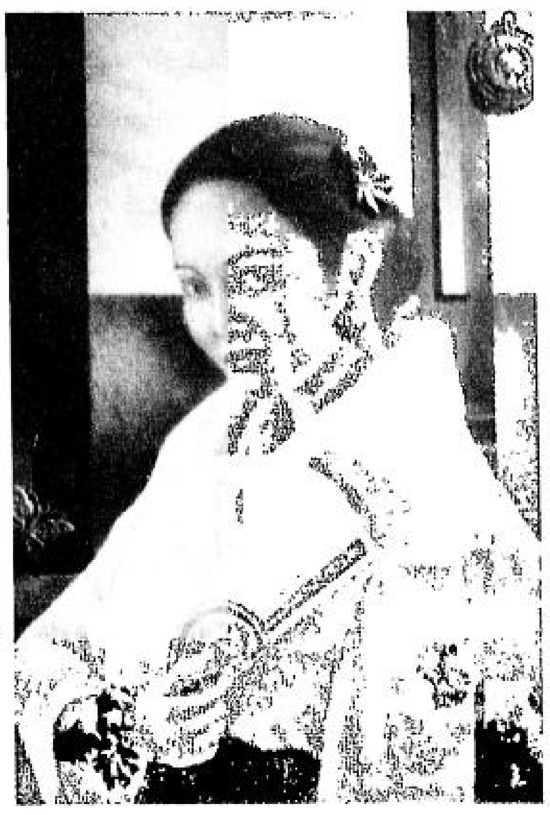
Joseph Lofranco presents his new works in acrylic and charcoal pencil in "Color Blind Casting," until June 10, at West Gallery, Mary Santos Artcade, West Avenue, Quezon City. Call 4110336/9221 and 3721194.



"DISPELLER of Darkness," by Manorainjan

Group exhibit

"Kulay Marikina," an art exhibit featuring the Marikina Painters Group, opens on May 30, 4-6 p.m. at Kamayan Restaurant, 207 Edsa, Greenhills, Mandaluyong City. Call 7172372 or 0920-9217284.



"REPASO: Cleo's Last Visit," by Noel Soler Cuizon

Back-to-back exhibits

On June 1, Karen Ocampo Flores' "Inordinate Designs" and Noel Soler Cuizon's "Apocrypha" will be on view at the Finale Art Gallery and West Gallery, respectively. Both exhibits will run until June 13. Both galleries are on the 4/F, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong. Call 6342410 or 6341284.

Sculptors at West

"Lovingly, Menacingly Yours: Objects of Warmth and Terror" features sculptures by Aba Lluch Dalena, Maria Taniguchi, Rius San Juan, Leeroy New, Cynthia Alexander, Carmel Lim, and Rey Medina; and collaborative objects by Bruihn, Cez Nuñez and Lyn Endrigano, and by Sarah de Veyra and Redg Plopino. It presents objects that depict persuasions ranging from the sentimental to the divine, the taboo, the decadent and even the shocking. The exhibit will run until June at the West Gallery Sculpture Room, Marisan Building, 48 West Ave., Quezon City. Call 4110336, 3721195 or 4119221.

Ventura at Ateneo

"Cross Encounters," an exhibit of works by 2005 Ateneo Art Awards winner Ronald Ventura, runs until July 21 at the Ateneo Art Gallery, G/F, Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, QC. Ventura was the first recipient of the Ateneo Art Gallery Sydney Studio Residency Grant. His works on exhibit include handpainted sculptures, paintings, sketches, toy figurines and a riot shield. Call 4266488.

Doctolero at Crucible

The Crucible Gallery presents a solo exhibit of watercolor by Ferdinand Doctolero on May 30 at 6 p.m. "Luck-WhatCha: Variety of Color Ways" (from the Tagalog street word *lakwatsa* which means "to travel or go on journey to different places") will showcase paintings in watercolor and pen and ink on paper. The exhibit will run until June 11 at the Crucible Gallery, 4/F, Bldg. A, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong. Call 6356061.

Gaechter at Crucible

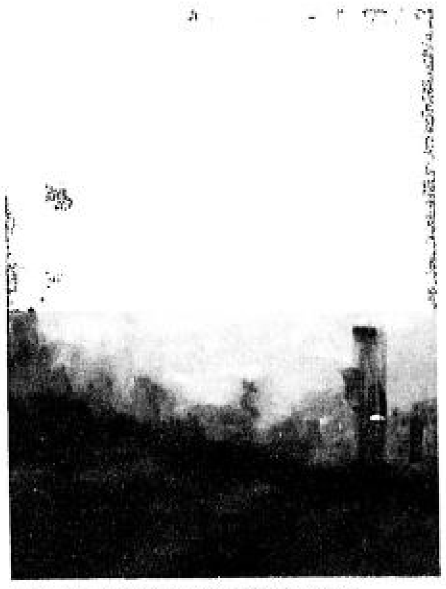
"Life with Mother-of-Pearl," a debut exhibit by jeweler/sculptor Paul Gaechter, will open on June 13, 6 p.m., at the Crucible Gallery. This sculpture collection showcases original designs, styled almost like mosaics, with mother-of-pearls as main material. The exhibit will run until June 25. Call 6356061.

Group exhibit at Pasig Museum

"Inner Journeys 2" features the recent works of members of the Ananda Marga, an organization which propagates the pursuit of self-realization and selfless service to humanity. Artists include Dada Rameshananda Avadhuta, Manorainjan, Ramchander, Jyosna, Paramesh and Arjuna. The exhibit runs until tomorrow at Pasig City Museum. Call 6410211.

Doctor at Power Plant

Artist Edgar Doctor is featured artist in the exhibit "Tribute to the Arts," opening on June 3, 6 p.m., North Court, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell, Makati.

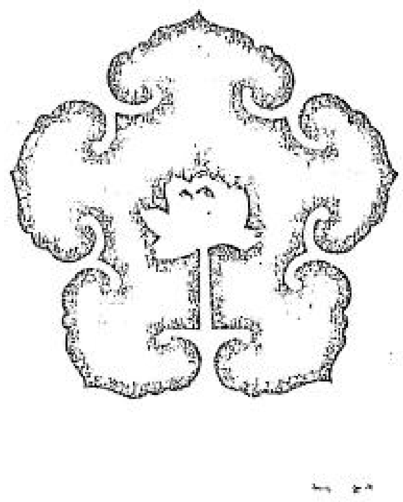


"BAGUIO at Sunset," by Jemina

Meanwhile, Jemina mounts her 11th solo exhibit "Sentimental Journey," until June 2, at the R1 Bridgeways of Power Plant Mall, Rockwell, Makati. The exhibit is the first of a series presented by Power Plant Mall and Yellow Door Gallery. It consists of paintings on canvas depicting Philippine landscapes. Call 0920-9624347.

Photo exhibit

The Manila Times presents "Popoli: The Faces of the Times," a photo exhibit featuring remarkable personalities such as artists Mauro "Malang" Santos and Ben Cabrera; actress and book author Pilar Pilapil; National Book Store founder Socorro Ramos; PNP general Arturo Lomibao; Ford Supermodel third runner-up, Charo Ronquillo, who have graced the cover of The Sunday Times. Call 5281257 or email belinda_0331@manilatimes.net.



"BLUE Tip Lotus Orange Cloud," by Emily Sycip-Cheng

Emily SyCip-Cheng mounts her solo exhibit "LotusCloudTreeMist," until June 8, on the 2/F, MuseumSpace, Ayala Museum. Call 8319990 or 8339815.

EQ Diapers Bonggang Binyagan

The recently held EQ Bonggang Binyagan baptized hundreds of babies in Metro Manila, Davao, Cebu, Dagupan, and Iloilo. In Metro Manila, there were 132 babies baptized in Fernwood Gardens with Tin-Tin Bersola Babao as one of the symbolic godparents. Moms and babies alike were beaming with joy as they were welcomed into the world of Christianity. The blessed babies also got to take home EQ diaper giveaways. This was truly a memorable moment for loyal user of EQ diapers.

In photos are, clockwise from left: Councilor Antonio Inton of 4th district QC, Eugene Go of EQ Diapers, Christine Bersola Babao & Korina Sanchez as symbolic godparents and the Lucky EQ Mom & baby

One of the hundreds of babies baptized in EQ Bonggang Binyagan

Lucky EQ Mom & Baby, Godparents and Fernwood priests.

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II. Submit the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper wrappers together with the following information: sender's name, complete address where you want the premium item/s delivered, baby's name and age, telephone and/or cellphone numbers, signature of parent/guardian, and the desired premium item, written on a piece of paper and enclosed in an envelope. For hard-to-find locations, it would be best that landmark information of the address given be provided for easy reference.

III. Entries can be mailed or hand carried to:

"EQ Dry Travel Buddies"
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc.
31st Floor, Raffles Corporate Center
Emerald Avenue, Ortigas Center, Pasig City

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"EQ Dry Travel Buddies"
P.O. Box 14280 Pasig City

IV. Choose from any of the following collectible baby bag designs with the required EQ Dry Baby Diaper label points:

Premium Items	Points
Baby Travel Bags: (available designs) A. Pink and blue color combination B. Green and yellow color combination	10 points each
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IMPORTANT:
- Only packs of EQ Dry with cloth-like cover (plain or white) will be accepted.
- Entries containing cut-out points will not be honored.

V. The chosen premium item/s shall be delivered by LIBCAP Express to the address submitted by the consumer. In the event that the entry sender is not present during the time of delivery, a member of the sender's household may be asked to sign a proof of delivery and receive the premium item/s in behalf of the entry sender.

VI. Delivery lead times for the premium items are as follows (commencing upon receipt of "delivery orders" by the courier):

a. Metro Manila: within 2 to 3 days
b. Luzon & Visayas: within 2 to 4 days
c. Mindanao: within 3 to 5 days

VII. Premium items will be delivered until 60 days from end of promo period.

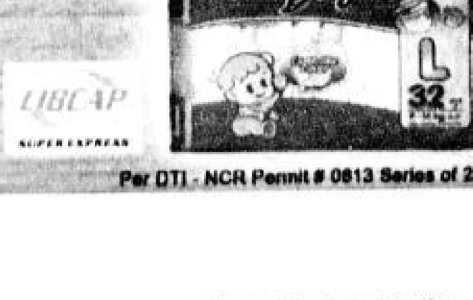
VIII. Consumers may join as many times as they want.

IX. Prizes are non-convertible to cash.

X. Entries thru mail are qualified 15 days after the promo period.

For more information, please visit www.jsunitrade.com

Happy si Baby, Happy si Mommy!



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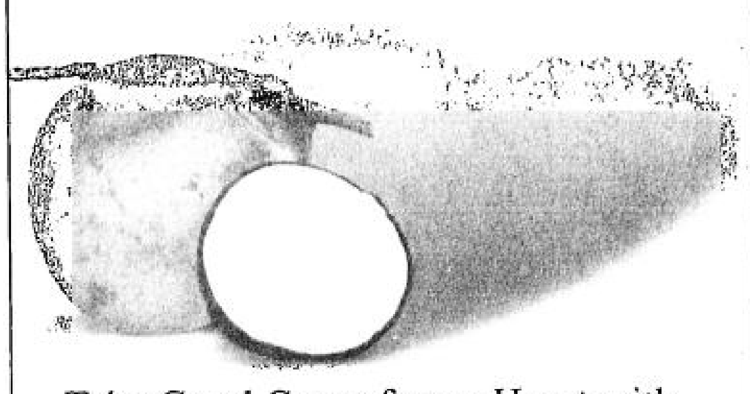
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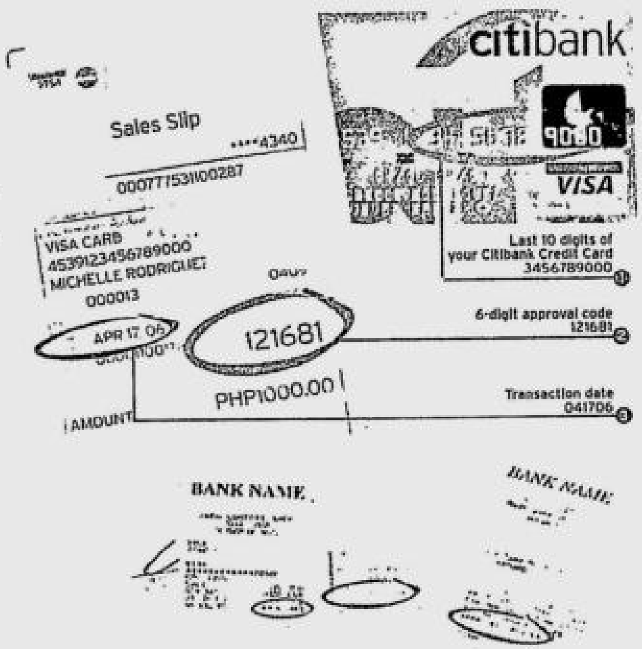

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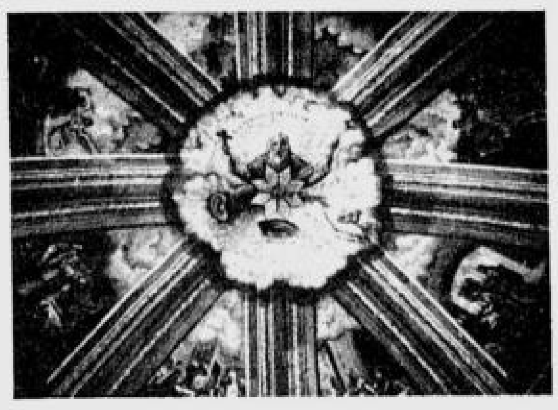
JOIN the Iloilo Heritage Walking Tour on May 30-31 when private homes like the Javellana-Lopez ancestral home open their doors.

TRADITIONAL musicians perform for Heritage Month.



TAGBILARAN church ceiling

Heritage Month closes in Iloilo

PRIDE OF PLACE

Augusto F. Villalon

HERITAGE IS ON THE forefront for the entire month of May each year when the National Heritage Month presents a variety of expressions that spring from our multifaceted Philippine culture.

The opening event May 1 was a concert by pianist Cecile Licad at the majestic San Agustin Church in Paoay (Ilocos Norte), an outstanding Philippine property inscribed in the Unesco World Heritage List because of its uniqueness and universal value.

The value of Heritage Month is that it brings out the continuum that is at the root of Philippine culture.

Religious rituals were not conducted in silence. Chanting, sermons, music and dance are powerful methods of prayer as well.

The cavernous structure acoustically enhances the music, so the concert at San Agustin in Paoay brought back a forgotten dimension—that churches are traditionally associated with great music such as Bach's and Mozart's sacred music, and especially our own Missa Baclayana composed in Baclayon Church (Bohol) and religious music composed by Adonay.

Heritage month organized visits and walking tours, convincing owners to open their heritage homes to visitors. Lakbay Bulacan walked people through stately homes in the province, served the delicacies and heirloom recipes normally prepared in those homes, and entertained guests with dances in heritage living rooms in the same manner that a host of a century ago would have done.

Heritage linkages are what Heritage Month achieves to relive. It shows that no facet of heritage stands alone, that architecture, art, music, drama, dance, costumes, cuisine, and traditional craft coexist, and that together, rather than singly, they tell the Philippine story much better.

Aside from food festivals, there have also been food essay-writing competitions. Photo, textile and art exhibits have also been showing in cities nationwide. A series of stamps commemorated the necklace of Spanish colonial lighthouses still standing in the farthest reaches of the Philippine archipelago. A book and photo exhibit of lighthouses were also launched.

Traditional and modern fabrics, hand-loomed by time-honored tribal and lowland weavers from various parts of the country, were demonstrated and shown, some turned into stunning contemporary fashion.

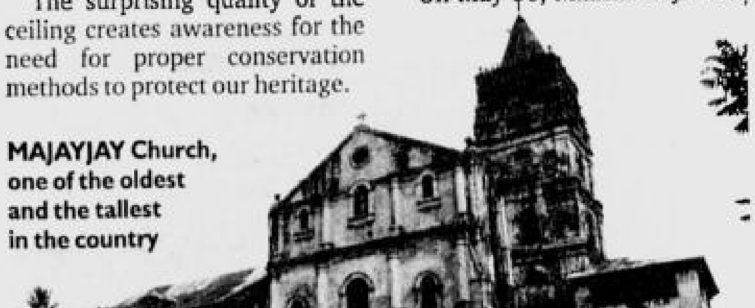
In Bacolod, Silay and Bago cities in Negros Occidental, exhibits featured the contents of old *baul* (trunks) and *aparador* (armoires) of ancestral homes—delicate *sayas*, precious jewelry, religious objects, books, an intimate look into the *haciendero* lifestyle from a century ago.

Heritage month is conceived as a month-long festival highlighting cultural heritage sites by using them as venues for cultural activities. Various facets of Philippine culture such as *tiangges*, music and dance performances, visual arts, exhibits, culinary events, art and design retrospectives, walking tours, and much more are offered.

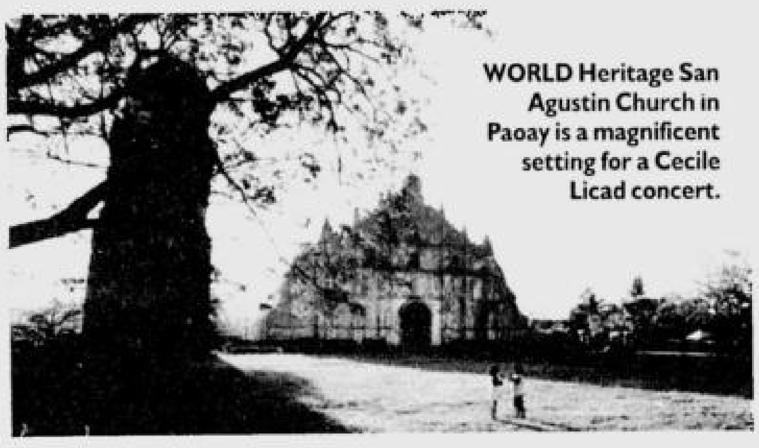
The activities are an enjoyable way to advocate for heritage, focusing attention on endangered heritage, re-introducing forgotten heritage, and bringing either outstanding heritage examples or successful conservation efforts all over the country to public attention.

An extraordinary treasure not really known to the public is the centuries-old ceiling painting by artist Raymundo Francia at Loboc Church in Bohol. The luminosity of the colors result from secret paint mixtures by the artist, which attest to the Filipino's talent.

The surprising quality of the ceiling creates awareness for the need for proper conservation methods to protect our heritage.



MAJAYJAY Church, one of the oldest and the tallest in the country



WORLD Heritage San Agustin Church in Paoay is a magnificent setting for a Cecile Licad concert.

DETAIL of a Tagbilaran church ceiling

Although much Philippine heritage is endangered, all is not lost. Unknown to many, heritage advocacy and conservation programs are often more successful outside of Manila. The work of the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation in documenting and preserving the coastal towns in southern Cebu is an outstanding example.

The success of Iloilo in heritage advocacy is the result of activities by a group of committed residents who are working harmoniously with Mayor Jerry Treñas. Iloilo's is an example that the rest of the country can emulate.

In a fitting tribute to Philippine heritage, Iloilo opens its doors to heritage lovers in events to cap Heritage Month.

On May 30, Maasin City's Tultugan bamboo ensemble and a *rondalla* will welcome participants to a grand walking tour of Iloilo mansions—the Javellana-Lopez, Jalandoni-Lopez Vito, Hormillosa-Locsin heritage homes, and the Magdalena Jalandoni Museum.

In the evening, the Ilonggo *zarzuela* "Ang Gugma ni Dansoy kag Rosing" will be performed.

On May 31, the walking tour continues to Molo Church and Convent, the Mejica Museum, Iloilo Sinamay House, and the heritage bakery Panaderia de Molo.

A Flores de Mayo caps the afternoon, followed by troubadours singing sacred music from the Colegio de San Agustin Archives during Mass at the San José Church.

In the evening, "Halad," a tribute to the Blessed Virgin, will feature a traditional verse, *pagdayaw* (eulogy), together with songs and dances that burst into a fireworks display to conclude the 2006 National Heritage Month.

Heritage Watch

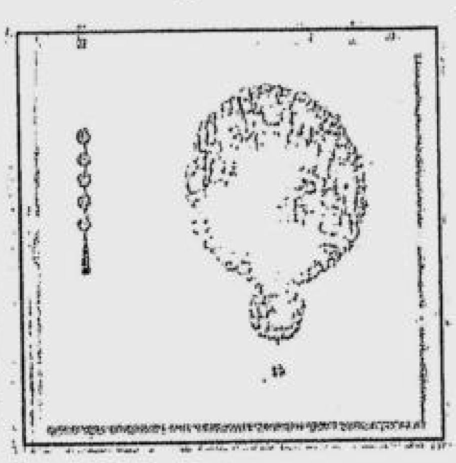
To inaugurate its new building at 855 T.M. Kalaw St. in Manila, Instituto Cervantes calls all Spanish speakers to participate in the First Continuous Public Reading of "Noli Me Tangere," which begins at 3 p.m. on June 16. The nonstop reading will continue for the next 20 hours, ending in the morning of June 17.

Paella wakes up the graveyard shift at midnight. At dawn, *churros con chocolate* are served to outgoing and incoming readers.

Some 250 readers are needed for the continuous reading. Put yourself on the list by calling Instituto Cervantes at 5261482-45, faxing 5251449, or e-mailing cenmnl@cervantes.es.

Please e-mail comments and feedback to pride.place@gmail.com

'Soft-Shell' at Avellana

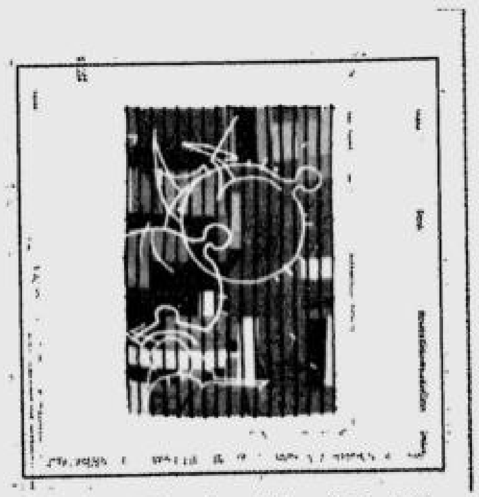


ON VIEW UNTIL JUNE 3 AT AVELLANA ART Gallery is Mac Valdezco's "Soft-Shell."

Composed of tapestries and soft, organic sculptures, the exhibit straddles between that small, delicate space of art and craft. The aspect of craft is characterized by the materials which are sewn-together fabrics, rejects or excess of factory garments.

The art comes in the very sensitive notion of color and texture that guided the artist in her placements and the geometric flourish that renders the tapestries its metaphorical latch. In effect, the works are very personal not only in their evocation but also in their conception.

Avellana Art Gallery is at A-19, 2680 FB Harrison St., Pasay City (fronting Gideon Academy). Call 8338357.



"4 FOLDS" (above) and "Japa" (far left)

LIFESTYLE

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SUN CELLULAR

"THE COFFEE Shop Within the Play (Unravel Noh)," a Japanese-Filipino production staged by Naohiko Umewaka

All the world's a stage

Of some 30 performances from all over the world that graced the Theater Olympics of the Nations held in Manila, here are five that thrilled and moved us

By Gibbs Cadiz

WHAT'S IN A NAME? An actress like Olga Tudorache won't likely ring a bell here or in any place where Lindsay Lohan reigns. But thanks to the Unesco-International Theater Institute (ITI) Theater Olympics of the Nations, which ended just last night at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), we now know a miracle of an artist by her name exists.

Tudorache, along with Marius Bodochi, headlined the two-character play "Regina Madre," by the National Theater of Bucharest, Romania, one of many prominent drama groups from Europe, North and Latin America, Africa and the Arab States, the Caribbean and Asia that had come for the festival and made Manila, for two weeks at least, the world's theater capital.

Monster mothers have been a staple of world stages, from Medea to Mary Tyrone in O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey into Night," and to this list must be added playwright Manlio Santanelli's singular creation, a portrait of a matri-

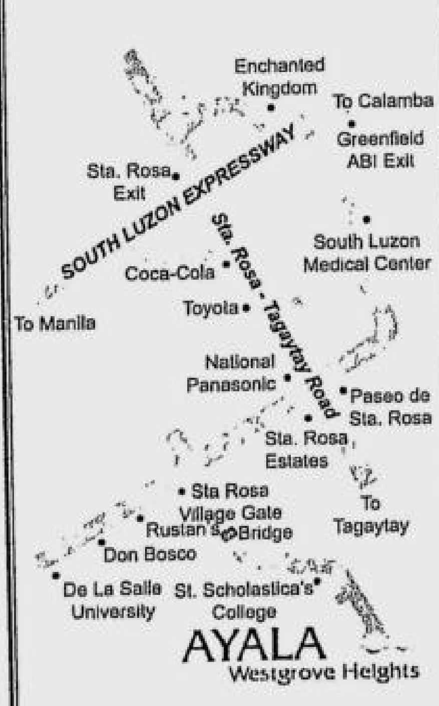
ALL THE/D2

The Good Life Begins With A Healthy Life

Located just minutes away from the Santa Rosa exit of the South Superhighway, Ayala Westgrove Heights was deliberately designed to cradle the fresh mountain air, to make even the littlest of breaths a pleasure in itself.

That's why over half of the property (or about 200 hectares) is devoted to parks, gardens, and recreational areas, with the other half reserved for residential development. What it adds up to is one of the least congested residential areas in the country today.
A place where you can breathe easily. Which, residents have discovered, has reduced occurences of asthma attacks in children, reawakened the desire to engage in outdoor activities. And it's not magic. All the air in Westgrove is fresh. And that's a lot more than can be said in many so-called modern residential communities today.

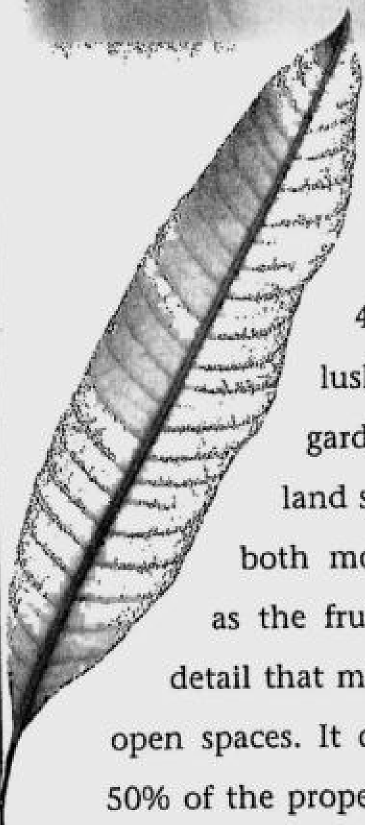
But in spite of being far enough from the city to escape smog and pollution and congestion, Ayala Westgrove Heights is still near enough commercial centers, drugstores, churches, markets, and even premier schools like St. Scholastica's Westgrove, DLSU Canlubang, Don Bosco and Brent International School to make living here the new standard in living well.



AyalaLand PREMIER

At Ayala Westgrove Heights, air freshening doesn't come in cans.

Others call it refreshing. We call it the next big thing in living well.



It comes instead, from over 400 hectares of rolling greens lush with orchards, groves and gardens. It comes from the way the land seems to cradle the winds from both mountain and woods. It comes as the fruit of painstaking attention to detail that maximizes and makes full use of open spaces. It comes from the fact that over 50% of the property has been devoted to parks, greenery and open spaces. And it all serves to make activities like fishing, jogging, strolling, biking, or just plain lazing around a true delight. One might even say that every breath is a pleasure at Ayala Westgrove Heights. Find out for yourself. Plan a visit today. And inhale. And exhale. And repeat.

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The Russians are coming

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

DENIS Matsuev, Russian pianist

WHAT DO MAYA PLISETSKAYA, Vladimir Spivakov and Mstislav Rostropovich have in common?

The great ballerina, the excellent violinist and the legendary cellist are all Russians and they have all performed for Filipino audiences to great acclaim.

These Russian icons have also performed with Filipino artists.

Plisetskaya performed with our own Maniya Barredo in one fundraising dance event in Guatemala. Spivakov performed Beethoven's Triple Concerto with Cecile Licad and Antonio Meneses in Spain. Rostropovich has performed many times with Licad) as conductor or cellist in chamber music.

Again Licad is performing a Shostakovich sonata with one of Russia's greatest living violinists, Gidon Kremer, in the Lockenhaus Festival in Austria next month.

The good news is that Manila's performing arts scene will once again be graced by great Russian artists and ensembles on June 14-18, according to Madam Valentina Nebogatova, first vice president of the Friendship Society Philippines-Russia Inc.

The series of performances will be called a festival of Russian culture in the Philippines. Ballet Manila under Lisa Macuja-Elizalde will be involved.

"I cannot deny that my Russian ballet education is a big part of my dancing life," said Elizalde during the presscon. "There are times when I speak in Filipino and think in Russian and vice versa."

At any rate, Madam Nebogatova has announced that the Russian festival will open June 14 with an exhibit opening and a screening of a Russian film.

A performance of the Folklore Ensembles will be held on June 15, to be followed by the dance gala of the "The Stars of Bolshoi Theater" on June 16.

On June 18, Russian pianist Denis Matsuev will perform with the San Miguel Philharmonic under the baton of Felix Korobov.

The special cultural ties between Russia and the Philippines will be chronicled by Music News Magazine, which will recall the first time Russian dance legends Anna Pavlova and violinist Mischa Ellman set foot in Manila in the 1920s.

Call 9017156 or 0910-8851136.

Peace Orchestra

Many are wondering whatever happened to the Peace Philharmonic Philippines (PPP), which used to be the Cebu Youth Symphony Orchestra.

Well, the regular players are still alive and kicking and have just wrapped up a summer festival series from Cagayan de Oro to Cebu City.

In April and early this May, I caught up with two events of the PPP Chamber Players at the Cebu Waterfront Hotel Ballroom.

The April 23 concert featured guest conductor Eugene Fredrick Castillo conducting Wagner's "Siegfried Iydil" with Ingrid Sala Santamaria as soloist in the Chopin E Minor Concerto (arranged for a string quartet) and the Edward MacDowell D Minor Concerto.

Even with a small chamber group, Castillo managed to elicit formidable sound from the PPP Players and made "Siegfried Idyll" quite poignant in many parts (it was initially threatened by the sound of rock band rehearsing in the adjacent ballroom).

Santamaria had lyricism on the palm of her hand in the Chopin E Minor Concerto, but it was in the MacDowell piano concerto that she showed her best in an unusual concerto that was fast in the second movement and ending largo molto allegro toward the dramatic finale.

On May 7, I got the chance to see the group in a program of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, and Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64, again at the Waterfront Hotel Ballroom.

Conducted by Jeffrey Solares, the Mendelssohn concerto with soloist Sara Maria Gonzales was easily the evening's most memorable highlight. She played with verve, not losing the feel of the Mendelssohn melancholy inherent in the piece. Solares gave her excellent support.

Santamaria, who has witnessed the musical growth of these young musicians, points out that although the PPP lost some of its players to Manila-based orchestras and to schools abroad where the Cebu musicians easily qualified for scholarships, a few have remained to keep Cebu's classical music alive. They not only make music; many PPO players teach and have music studios of their own.

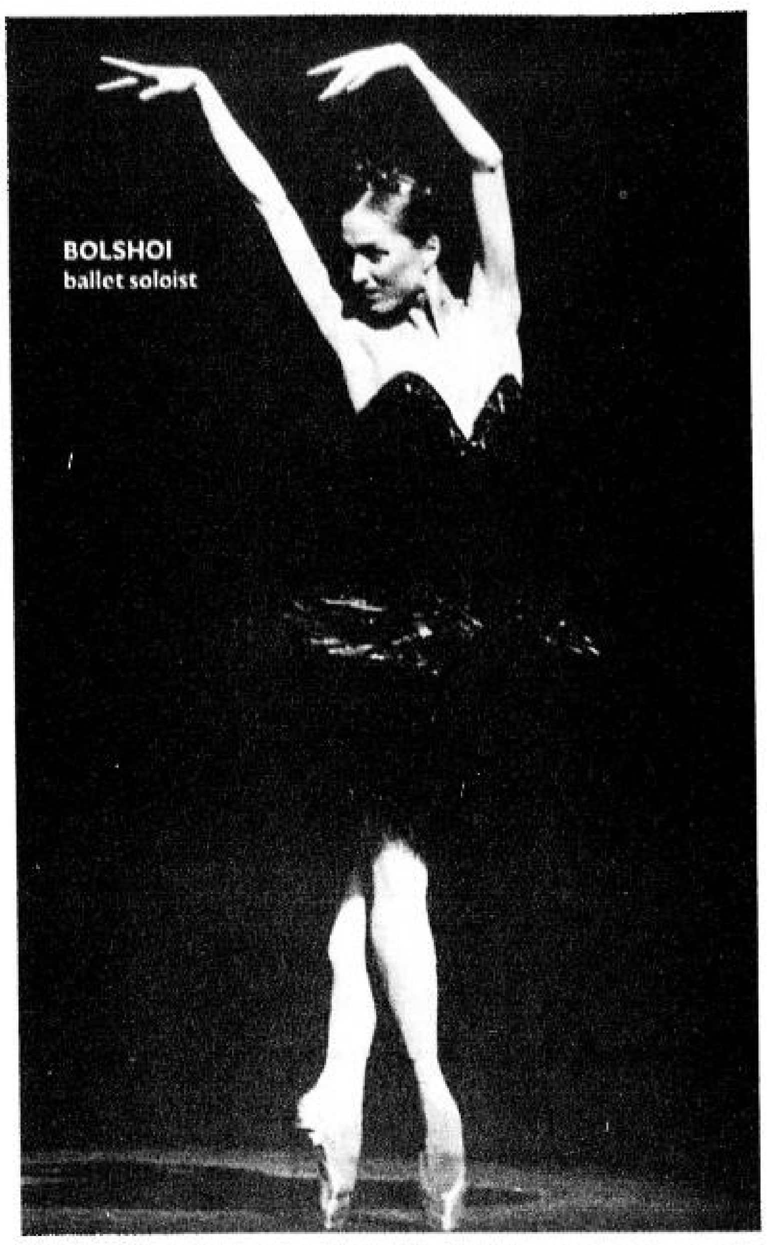
A regular partner in the PPP music-making is the Cebu Waterfront Hotel under Marco Protacio.

"Without this venue sponsor," says Santamaria, "we will be hard put to keep classical music alive on this part of the Visayas."

Here and there

Two-time Namcya first prize winner Oliver Salonga will be heard in a special solo recital at the Philamlife Theater on June 25, 8 p.m.

His program: Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 31 I A flat Major, Op. 110; Prokofiev's Sonata No. 7 in B Flat Major; and Chopin's Sonata No. 2 in B Flat Minor, Op. 35. Call 9017156 or 0910-8851136 for tickets.


BOLSHOI
ballet soloist

Another outstanding product of the Philippine High School for the Arts, clarinetist Girard Moses Villanueva from Baguio City graduated summa cum laude with a music degree in Music Performance at the Lynn University Conservatory of Music in Florida on May 13. He was also in the honors class with an honors degree in Applied Mathematics.

Girard's story is a classic case of music scholars who persevere even without help from institutions that are supposed to take care of the country's young talents.

UST SINGERS

UST Singers tour Taiwan

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON Culture and the Arts has given a grant to the internationally acclaimed University of Santo Tomas Singers for its 12th international concert tour, which culminates in Taiwan, May 20-31.

The UST Singers, under the baton of professor Fidel Gener Calalang Jr., will present concerts at the National Concert Hall Taipei, Taipei Philharmonic Art Center, Taichung Chung Shan Concert Hall, Keelung City Concert Hail and HsinChu County Concert Hall.

Highlights of this tour are lecture on "Philippine Folk Songs in the Choral Repertoire" by Calalang. The Taiwan stint of the UST Singers is organized by the Taipei Philharmonic Foundation for Culture and Education under its manager, Ferdinand Ting.

Earlier, the UST Singers toured South Korea and Singapore. They had a successful performance at the Esplanade Concert Hall in Singapore, May 14, before a packed audience of choral fans and enthusiasts where they received several standing ovations and obliged to demands for an encore. The event was graced by the Philippine Ambassador to Singapore, Belen Fule Anota.

Since 1992, the UST Singers have gone on 12 international concert tours and won over 45 top prizes in Europe. Calalang, founder and conductor, heads the Conducting Department of the UST Conservatory of music. He won the Best Conductor Prize at the Tonen Choral Competition in The Netherlands.

All the world's a stage

From page C1

arch so towering that it could send a son to the pits and sustain a two-hour-long talky tragicomedy.

Santanelli's Italian-language play (staged by Gelu Colceag), about washed-up, middle-aged Alfredo who returns home to his ill, spiteful mother, flies fast and furious with quicksilver shifts in tone, emotion and insights into calcified human relationships.

As the long-estranged mother and son come to terms with each other's presence, the barbed language and poisonous air lend the stage a parodic, unhinged blend of sourness and affection worthy of an Almodovar movie.

"Why are you wearing the curtain?" asks Alfredo.

"Why, you like the window better?" counters his mother.

Behind the fury, of course, is a lifetime of regret and discontent.

"I wanted your affection," Alfredo says. "But you offered me only indifference. Then I stirred up your hatred. It's better than indifference, anyway."

Tudorache, seldom raising her voice yet unfailingly drawing blood with her bladed maternal putdowns, was astounding. Bodochi, too, was excellent, but "Regina Madre" was clearly his costar's show, and in a festival overflowing with talent from so many countries, this platinum-haired dragonfly of an actress deserved every bit of the ovation she received at curtain call.

Olga Tudorache. Remember her name.

Exhausting, exhilarating

Sifting through a two-week festival chock-full with performances in all guises imaginable, from a monologue (Lia Karavia's "Prison" from Greece) to a veritable fiesta of a musical ("Something to Crow about," Cecille Guidote Alvarez's stage production of National Artist Alejandro Roces' short stories on cockfighting), could be exhausting.

Nevertheless, the exhilaration of finding memorable surprises, like Tudorache's turn in "Regina Madre," more than offset the stress. Since the biannual Unesco theater fete goes 'round the globe, the visiting drama groups from as far away as Iceland and Burkina Faso were here for perhaps the first and last time, so missing them would be a high crime for any theater lover.

It would've been quite a loss, for instance, to miss "No Return," an enchanting production by the Finnish drama company Viirus. Opening at 10 a.m., to a nearly empty Tanghalang Aurelio Tolentino at the CCP, "No Return's" company of six actors gamely unspooled their play, about, yes, six actors in search of a play.

"Is this Oklahoma?," goesthe first line. "I meant, of course, the great Oklahoma theater."

Six lost actors meet at an empty station and ride a train to a mythical company in Oklahoma that would hire them as performers, and thus give their lives purpose and meaning.

It's the old saw about dreamers hopping on to the locomotive of their dreams, but, as adapted from two Kafka stories, Viirus' "No Return" (directed by Lithuanian Cezarijus Grautzinis) gained a näif universality by rendering its characters like clowns on a vast bare stage.

Dressed in craypas-colored clothes and pasty makeup, gesturing like mimes in a silent movie, they evoked the world of tough-tender jesters from Chaplin to Marcel Marceau to Littlechap in the musical "Stop the World, I Want to Get off."

At the end of their journey, roused from sleep, they find themselves in another seemingly empty station. Is this the end?

A SCENE from Viirus' "No Return" from Finland
PHOTO COURTESY OF HTTP://WWW.SKENE.FI

Blinking at the light, once more frozen in that caught-in-the-headlights tableau that had opened the play, the six begin to sing—improvising, then tearing up into the tune. They stop, and miraculously, the heavens take up their song. Fade to black. One more proof the gods were smiling at this festival.

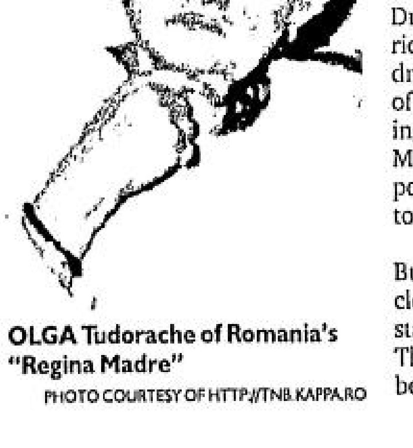
Erudite monologue

Dignity against despair was also the subject of Greek playwright-poet-actress Lia Karavia's stirring and erudite one-woman show, "Prison."

In this one-act play, a political prisoner, Nina, narrates a typical day spent behind bars for her outspoken beliefs against racial bigotry. Alternating between moments of terror, guarded hope and bone-scarring tedium, her story echoes and expands the ground covered by other epic hymns to prison survival like Solzhenitsyn's "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" or, more recently, Martin Sherman's "Bent."

Like the protagonists in these works, Nina's ability to keep herself sane in the face of dehumanizing invisibility rests on her grasp of memory, minutiae, details.

"I know what date it is," she begins. "It is September the 20th. Good! The first thing to do every day, when daylight comes into my prison cell, is to remember the date, and also the day. Today is Sunday."


OLGA Tudorache of Romania's "Regina Madre"
PHOTO COURTESY OF HTTP://TNB.KAPPA.RO

A SCENE from the contemporary segment of "The Coffee Shop within the Play (Unravel Noh)"

Her sound mind is a bulwark against the system's drive to efface her off the earth.

"You have run out of arguments," she recalls her tormentor saying. "Will you sign a paper binding you, under oath, perjury punished with a drink of conium, never to lecture and preach your anti-racial discrimination preaching, when we set you free? Or will you go back to your cell to rot, and wait for Mister Death?"

And she says, a grin curling her mouth, "I did not even tell him that Death is a lady in many languages and, therefore, in the art of many countries. *La morte. La muerte. La mort. A morte. Adna smert...*"

Imaginative staging

From Burkina Faso's Theatre De La Fraternite came "Three Sisters in Distress," a play about women coping with rape, oppression and other forms of abuse. Its imaginative staging (by Jean Henri Dreze), alive with the sensory richness of African chants and drums, plus the breathtaking sight of female actors bravely parodying the lazy, misogynistic strain of Muslim manhood, reaffirmed the power of issues-oriented theater to instruct as much as delight.

Among all the festival entries, Burkina Faso's contribution felt closest to what the Philippines' stalwart Philippine Educational Theater Association (Peta) had been doing all these years.

But then, theater could also be nonsensical, concerned about nothing in particular, and yet still be as mesmerizing. "The Coffee Shop within the Play (Unraveling Noh)," a collaboration between Japan and the Philippines, proved this point with a flourish.

What initially appeared to be a play within a play slowly dissolved into an exercise in artful nonsense, in logic that slashed and burned in all the wrong places. Taking a leaf from Kafka, Beckett, Ionesco and the Japanese's own penchant for mixing high and low cultures, the sort-of meta-play started with an excerpt from an ancient Noh dance, distinguished by meticulously exact movements.

Then the plot to "unravel Noh" began with a contemporary scene showing a director directing a play about a director directing a play—or so it appeared, until bizarre things began happening and the play pitched headlong into an absurdist dream. The metronomed world of Noh was now in counterpoint to a universe where nothing made sense.

Enigmatic, challenging, deliriously textured, Naohiko Umewaka's "The Coffee Shop within the Play" was not only a fine showcase of Filipino actors doing great by foreign material, but of theater's possibility to unnerve, confound and extend the boundaries of the real.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph

JOHN Robert Powers students in 2005 talent show

Talent showcase

JOHN ROBERT POWERS WILL HOLD ITS third exclusive invitational activity entitled "Famous" to showcase the potential of its students before distinguished talent managers. This is an activity the school is continuously pursuing to provide its students opportunities and maximum exposure.

The event will be held on two Sundays, June 4 and 11, 6-8 p.m., at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, Podium 4, RCBC, Ayala cor. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City. The students will showcase their talents in hosting, runway, fashion print, TV commercial, acting, singing and dancing. At least 150 students are joining the talent show.

This activity is similar to the International Modeling and Talent Association (IMTA) competition held in Hollywood and New York every year where students of John Robert Powers-Manila participated in and competed with aspiring models, actors, dancers, and singers from all over the United States and other key cities in the world.

Caged heat

From page D4

Claiming self-defense, Angela is fighting a frustrated murder charge and discovers that, in a filthy jail cell, her most immediate battle is to keep her dignity intact.

It is not easy; suspected felons and sordid crimes hardly make for uplifting company and jail guards soon find them the handiest outlet for the frustrations of their dead-end jobs.

Considered the dregs of society, even minor offenders are treated like criminals from the start, deprived of basic rights, literally stripped of privacy by fellow inmates in an initiation called "health inspection," abused by wardens and prisoners alike, and, thanks to overloaded court dockets and the lack of legal counsel, could spend years behind bars way beyond their sentence while waiting for their day in court.

Written in conversational Filipino, the novel's textured language is a distinct tribute to how expressive, gut-felt and nuanced one's native tongue can be, no matter how coarse the discourse among prisoners.

True, the deprivations of life inside prison can be fairly common knowledge; what isn't are the stories that make the inmates less of statistics and more of individuals caught in circumstances that limit their choices.

There is the battered wife who fought back only when her husband started abusing her children; the hold-up woman who knew of no other trade to support her family; the house-help tempted into stealing because her child needed more food, and three aging prostitutes coarsened by life on the streets.

It is amazing how the author can make the ordinary reader empathize with such doubtful characters. Even the warden who gets into trouble for allowing errant children to stay with their inmate parents gets a fair hearing from Bautista.

As for Angela, life behind bars becomes even more complicated when she discovers she is pregnant. Again, Bautista challenges our long-held beliefs with provocative questions on how society views children, the rights and responsibilities of parents and society, the best environment for raising kids, and so on. Are there any right or wrong answers?

The writer doesn't say, but her novel's upbeat ending should tell us where her sentiments lie even if, given the novel's setting and premise, the optimism might have been misplaced. But then again, you have to remind yourself that this is fiction; it only reads and feels like real life.

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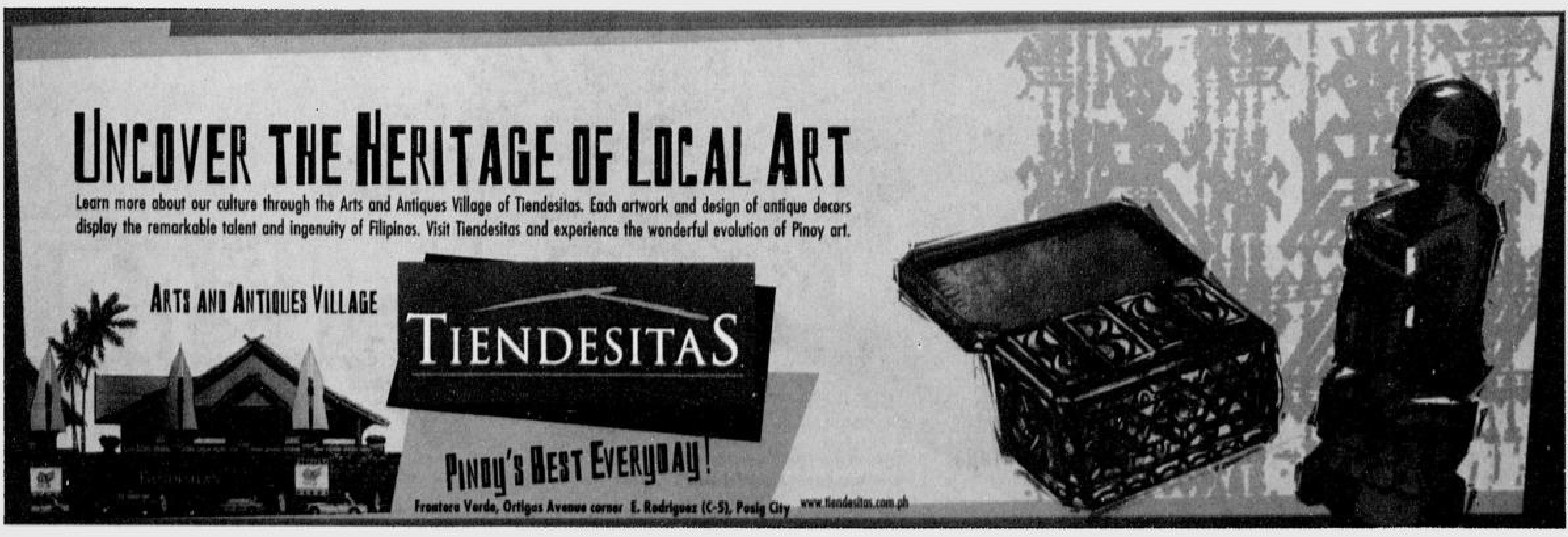
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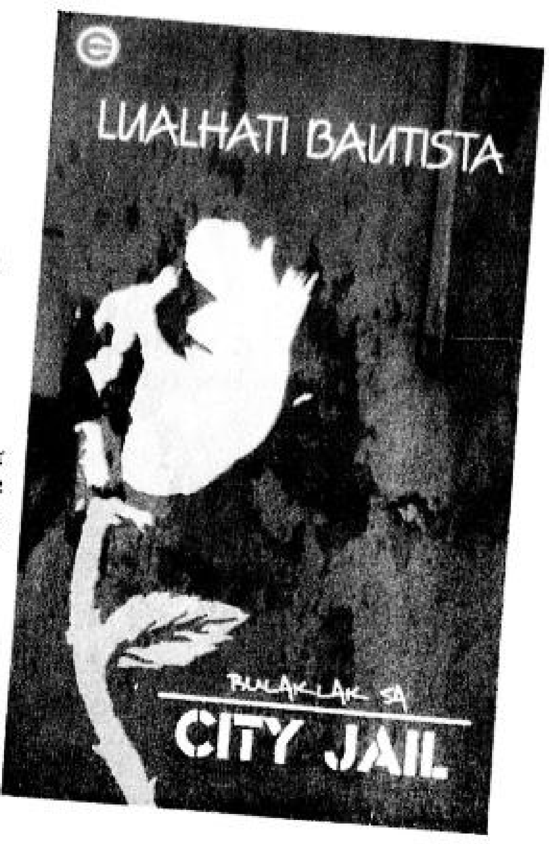
Caged heat

Lualhati Bautista adapts her 1984 Nora Aunor starrer into a novel

By Pennie Azarcon-dela Cruz



TRUST LUALHATI BAUTISTA TO PUT A human face on yet another demographics we'd rather ignore: women behind bars. The multi-awarded novelist, screenwriter and fictionist has always taken up the cudgels for the outcast, the often misunderstood and the simply different.

So why should we care that Angela Gutierrez, a naïve Other Woman who believed the sugared promises of her lover, now faces serious jail time for stabbing and seriously wounding her paramour's wife? What do we have in common with this 25-year-old waitress from Bits n Pieces Beer Garden anyway?

A lot, as it turns out. Bautista's gritty prose spares no one as she drags us out of our complacent selves and heaves us into the constricted space occupied by her flawed characters. By the time we're midway through the novel, Angela has become as familiar as one's next-door neighbor and all too human.

A novel serialized in Liwayway Magazine and adapted into a movie starring Nora Aunor in 1984, "Bulaklak sa City Jail" (C & E Publishing) gives the reader an unflinching look into the dehumanizing rituals that pass for this country's justice system.

CAGED/ D3

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